

INTRODUCING THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES



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Preface

Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios is known as one of the most creative interpreters of the Orthodox Christian theological and spiritual tradition in the 20th century. His rediscovery of St. Gregory of Nyssa and the patristic heritage in general in relation to the issues and concerns of the contemporary world had a remarkable influence on some of our secular thinkers and political leaders. His interpretations of God-world-humanity relationship in Eastern Christianity shaped and fostered some of the inter-faith debates as well as dialogues between religion and science and between religion and ideologies in the closing decades of the 20th century.

Within the Orthodox Christian world, his ecumenical and theological efforts made headway in reconciling the Byzantine Orthodox family of Churches with the five Oriental Orthodox Churches after a separation of 1500 years since the Council of Chalcedon in 450 A.D. During his long ecumenical pilgrimage associated with the World Council of Churches he made close contacts with the leaders and theologians of these churches. So Mar Gregorios is eminently qualified to write about the Orthodox Churches. Since he was a well respected spokesman of Orthodox (eastern) Christianity for more than three decades, his insights and observations carry great weight.

This book is a collection of Mar Gregorios's occasional writings about the various Orthodox Churches and Orthodoxy in general. The names of certain incumbents of office and some of the statistical data regarding the Churches have changed. An effort has been made by us to update them, but such data keep changing in living communities. The value of the book then consists in the historical surveys and perceptive remarks of Mar Gregorios regarding the life and witness of the Eastern Churches. With the new awareness among Western Christians unbroken heritage of

the Christian Orient, this book provides a dependable, clear way forward.

Mar Gregorios Foundation is immensely grateful that the timely contribution of the Orthodox Christian Youth Movement of the East, UAE Zonal Committee 1997 has made this publication possible. Our deep gratitude goes to Rev. Fr. T.P. Kurian, President of the Youth Zonal Committee and the leaders of the Youth Movement. We wish also to thank the Rev. Ashish Amos and his colleagues at the ISPCK for the continuing collaboration in making known the works of Paulos Mar Gregorios to a wider public in India and abroad.

(Rev. Dr.) K.M. George,
President,
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Kottayam,
January 26, 1999

Biodata

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|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Date of Birth | : 9th August, 1922 |
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Completed his education from Oklahoma University, Union Theological Seminary (U.S.A.), Princeton Theological Seminary, Yale University (U.S.A.), Oxford University (England), Gregory of Nyssa Institute (Germany).

Position held was the General Secretary—Orthodox Student Movement, Principal—Orthodox Theological Seminary (Kottayam), Leader—W.C.C. delegation to UNESCO, Heads of African States & UN General Assembly, Vice-President—Christian Peace Conference (Prague), Patron—Council for the World's Religion (New York), President—Inter Religious Federation for World Peace (New York).

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Biographical reference: Who's Who, World, The International Directory of Distinguished Scholarship, Five Thousand Personalities of the World.

Publications Author: The Joy of Freedom, the Gospel of the Kingdom, The Freedom of Man, Be Still and Know, Freedom and Authority, The Quest for Certainty, The Human Presence, Truth without Tradition, Science for Sane Societies, Cosmic Man, The Indian Orthodox Church (An Overview), Enlightenment-East and West, The Meaning of Diakonia, etc.etc.

CHAPTER 1

Introducing the Eastern Churches*

Most Indians have not even heard about an Eastern form of Christianity. They know mainly the two Western forms: Protestant and Roman Catholic. The average educated Indian, if he is well-read, knows the different forms and names of Protestantism: Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, Congregational, Church of South India, Church of North India and so on. And he knows that all these forms of Christianity have come from Europe, along with the colonialist-imperialist movements of the 15th century and afterwards.

But he has seldom heard about an eastern Christian Church. Nor has he most likely encountered one in India. It comes to him as a surprise therefore to learn that, as Nehru once said, Christianity is older in India than in most parts of Europe. It is a fact that the Christian Church has existed in India ever since the first century. When one of the original Twelve Apostles of Christ, St. Thomas came to India (in 52 A.D.) and established Churches here.

This ancient Eastern Church continues to this day in India, though the coming of the Western missionaries has nearly destroyed this ancient church and broken it up into several factions.

What is left in the old Eastern Christian tradition in India is the Orthodox Church, sometimes called the Syrian Orthodox Church, because Syriac was once the language of worship of this Church. It is rather small, just 15 lakhs of members, which is only 10% of the total number of Christians in this country.

*Article written in 1976.

Their significance should not be evaluated in terms of size alone. They are cultured, fully Indian, and have produced outstanding leaders, like the deputy Leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party, Mr. C.M. Stephen, and the Foreign Trade Commissioner, Dr. P.C. Alexander, Mr. A.M. Thomas, Chairman of the National Khadi Board and many such national leaders.

In what way are they different from the western Churches? There are some easily recognizable external differences. Their priests usually are bearded and wear a black cap. Their Bishops can be recognized by a special head-dress with one large cross (for Christ) and 12 smaller crosses (for the 12 apostles) embroidered on it. Their worship is more colourful than that of the Western Churches.

In administrative structure, the Indian Church is not subordinate to or dependent upon any Church or group outside India. They have their own supreme Head in India—His Holiness Catholicos Mar Thoma Baselius Mathew II, who resides in Kottayam, Kerala. The Indian Church is divided into dioceses, and there is an Indian Bishop or Metropolitan in charge of each diocese. The Metropolitans, along with the Catholicos constitute the Holy Synod, which is the supreme administrative body of the Church.

The differences in faith are more difficult to explain to the outsider. The main difference between Roman Catholics and the Orthodox is that the latter do not acknowledge the authority of the Roman Pope. Roman Catholics priests are unmarried, Orthodox priests can be married, unless they are monks (Orthodox bishops are always unmarried). The Roman Catholic Church follows the ways of thinking of certain Western thinkers like Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Ignatius Loyola etc. The Eastern Orthodox do not accept these teachers. They follow the teachings of the ancient Fathers (gurus) who lived before the Church was divided in the 5th century. Some of their teachers are St. Basil, St. Athanasius, St. Cyril, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Severus etc. The differences between these two groups of teachers are subtle but significant. There are very difficult points like whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone or from the Father and Son; these are not easily comprehensible except for the trained

theologian. On matters like sacraments, grace, sin, Holy Spirit also there are some significant differences of opinion between Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox.

With the Protestants, the differences are even greater. The orthodox do not believe that the Bible is the only authority for the Christian teaching. The whole tradition of the Church, which not only includes the Bible, but also the teachings of the ancient Fathers and the decisions of the Councils, is authoritative for them. They do not believe, as some Protestants do, that the Church is composed of the believers coming together. They believe that the Church is one in all ages and all places, and that all those who have ever believed in Christ (even those who lived before Christ) are even now members of the Church, and that the Christians now living form only a small part of the Church. The Orthodox do not regard the bishop, or his representative the priest, as merely someone commissioned to preach the word and administer the sacraments. The bishop or priest is a visible manifestation of Christ Himself and they revere Him accordingly. The Orthodox also give greater importance to the sacraments like Baptism, the Holy Anointing, Confession, Eucharist (Mass), Ordination of priests, the Sacrament of matrimony etc. Protestants have fewer sacraments (mainly Baptism and Lord's Supper) and do not give the same importance to these as the Orthodox do.

The forms of worship of the Orthodox are entirely Eastern, brought from Palestine and Syria, and indigenized in India through centuries of use. The Protestants and Roman Catholics are still trying to emancipate themselves from their recently imported Western heritage.

The main tenant of the Orthodox faith is the belief that salvation is by being united with Christ who is Isvara incarnate. By being united with Him, we are to grow into God's image by becoming more and more god-like in character, in love, in goodness and in wisdom. This process of transformation is called theosis or divinisation. This is very close to certain schools of Hindu thinking about salvation by yoga or union with Brahama.

The Orthodox Church in India lives at peace with followers of other religions like Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsees, Jains, Bud-

dhists etc. They are not aggressive in trying to convert the others, but are prepared to live with them in peace and concord, and with respect. For this reason they are often accused by more aggressive Protestant and Catholics, of being defective or lacking in missionary Zeal.

The Orthodox place greater emphasis on the quality of spiritual life, on worshipping God in a fitting way, and in showing love and compassion to all, rather than on evangelism or social activism. They run schools and hospitals, orphanages and homes for the destitute, but not for the sake of attracting converts. It is a silent labour of service in humility which is its own reward.

CHAPTER 2

The Orthodox Churches*

To most people, the word, 'Orthodox', means conservative, unchanging, and even stubborn or antiquated. For Eastern Orthodox Christians it means something very precious. They (The Orthodox Christians) created that word, and it signifies to them the heart of the Christian faith. How?

In the whole history of the Christian Church, though there have been many heresies, one remains central. This was the heresy of Arius, the fourth century Presbyter of Alexandria, who taught that Jesus Christ is a created being, not God. To Arius and his followers, only God the Father was truly God, because He alone is without beginning. The Son, being begotten, began only when he was begotten, and the Holy Spirit, proceeding from God, is also a created being to the Arians.

This heresy was expressed in the fourth century in the common prayers of the Church, through a particular form of the doxology: "Glory be to the Father, through the son, by the Holy Spirit". The Church which did not follow Arius used our present form: "Glory be to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, One True God from ages unto ages of ages. Amen". In this first heretical form, the glory was ascribed only to God the Father, while the Son and the Holy Spirit were only channels or intermediaries. In the second form equal glory was ascribed to all three persons of the Godhead, and at the same time the unity of the Triune God was affirmed.

The controversy then became about which is the right form of doxology for praising God. These who insisted on the and...and

*Article written in 1986.

formula, held they were rightly (in Greek, *orthos*), praising, glorifying (in Greek *doxadzein*) God. Thus it became the mark of non-heretical Christianity to use the word Orthodox (from *orthos doxadzein*) to distinguish themselves from the heretics, who by "their through....by" formula denied the doctrine of the Triune God and of the Incarnation of the Son of God. Today this latter heretical is invading many churches, while for the Orthodox, anyone who denies the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation of God the Son, rules himself or herself out of the Church.

The Eastern Orthodox today number some 165 million Christians divided into two families of approximately 130 million and 35 million respectively. The larger family consists of some 20 churches in communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople (in Istanbul, Turkey). The Russian Orthodox Church is the largest, with an estimated membership of about 80 million; the Romanian Orthodox Church comes next (about 17 million); The Church of Greece (about 8 million), the Serbian Orthodox Church (about 5 million), the Ecumenical Patriarchate, scattered in Europe, America, Australia, New Zealand and so on, (about 2 million), the Orthodox Church of America (about 2 million), the Church of Cyprus (about 2 million), the Georgian Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union (about 2 million), are the other notable ones. In addition there are the smaller Orthodox Churches like the Greek Patriarchates in Japan, Albania (suppressed) Poland, Czechoslovakia, Finland, etc.

The smaller Orthodox family, just as ancient, is in five churches, the Ethiopian (22 million), the Coptic of Egyptian (8 million), the Armenian (3 million), the Indian (2 million) and the Syrian (¼ million).

The two families separated from each other in the fifth century, following cultural conflicts and doctrinal disputes about whether the united divine-human nature of the incarnate Christ should be counted as one or two. The two sides called each other Monophysite (one nature) and Diophysite (two natures). The conflict arose actually from resistance to Byzantine imperial cultural domination of the Asian African peoples, and had its focus at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. Today, the two families have

come to unofficial theological agreements, but communion between them has not yet been restored.

If you ask the question, "In what way do the eastern Orthodox differ from the Eastern Catholics and Protestants?" The answer cannot be very precise. The difference is more in ethos and spirituality than in dogma.

The differences between Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholics are easier to spell out. First of all the Eastern Orthodox do not accept the authority of the Pope. They believe that each regional or national Church should be administrated autocephalous (having its own head) and the highest authority in each church is its own Synod of Bishops rather than anyone outside. Even the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, who can be spokesman for all the Orthodox Churches in communion with his Church when authorized by them, has no direct jurisdiction in any Church other than his own. They regard the Roman Papacy as a denial of the Apostolic Constitution of the Church.

Further, the Eastern Orthodox believe that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, while the Roman Catholics state that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. This is an intricate theological point, difficult to understand for the untrained mind. Naturally, the Orthodox do not accept the Roman Catholic dogma of Papal Infallibility, nor do they accept as dogma the Roman Catholic teaching on the bodily assumption into heaven of the Virgin Mary after her death. There are also differences in the number of acknowledged Ecumenical Councils in the history of the Church. While the Roman Catholics accept more than 20 such Councils, the latest being the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) the Constantinople Orthodox accept only seven. The five Oriental Orthodox Churches accept only three Ecumenical Councils, namely Nicea (325) Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431).

A more fundamental difference is the conception of the Church. The Church is more than a collection of believers. Even if all the Christians living today were gathered together, that would not be the Church. The Church is the Body of Christ wherein dwells the Holy Spirit who came upon the Church at Pentecost. If it is the Body of Christ, then Christ is present in the body. The Orthodox

do not think of Christ as only the Lord of the Church, somehow standing outside or above it. Christ is Lord in the sense that I am (or should be) Lord of my body. This intimate union of the Church with Christ and the Holy Spirit is in spite of the presence of sinful human beings in it; in fact it is the forgiven sinner who is united to Christ by the Holy Spirit, and all sinners united to Christ are also united to each other. All believers, from "Adam to the Second Coming" are in the Church, and do not leave the Body of Christ at the time of death. The Orthodox are much aware of the perpetual presence of Christ, the Virgin Mary, the Apostles, the Prophets, Adam and Eve, and all the Holy Ones in the church which is experienced especially at worship. In the Eucharistic liturgy, Christ is visibly present through the celebrant priest's vested presence, and the holy ones are present through the various icons. Hence the importance of icons in Christian worship. This accounts also for the frequent reference to St. Mary, the Apostles, the martyrs, the great teachers, who are all present with us in the worship of the Church. We do not worship God as the community of faith without making special remembrance of the Holy ones who though departed from a personal body of one's own, are present in the body of Christ. So are all the departed who died in Christ. We do not forget them in our worship.

The icons are, so to speak, are windows through which one can 'see' the saving events of the incarnation of Jesus Christ and his continuing life in the Body of Christ. We make icons or religious paintings only of those aspects of God which have been physically manifested through the prophets of the Old Testament, through Jesus Christ, and through His saints in the Church.

The Eucharist of the offering (in Syriac Qurbano, same root as Qurban in Urdu) is the central act of the Church, embodying the mystery of the faith in a much richer way than any creed. Here the community of faith, at regularly appointed times, comes together to offer themselves and their gifts to God through the bread and the wine, and to receive in faith the body and the Blood of Christ as God's gift to us. The eternal sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is thus made present to the community, and the community physically and spiritually participate in that life-giving event through communion in the body and the blood.

The Orthodox hold the Scriptures in the highest regard as the testimony of the Prophets and Apostles to Jesus Christ. They encourage reading, studying and meditating of the Scriptures, and at least eight passages, five from the Old Testament and three from the New Testament, are to be read in each Sunday or festal liturgy.

The Orthodox place more importance on prayer and fasting and on doing compassionate acts of love, especially for the poor, than on theologically correct belief or verbal witnessing. The emphasis falls more on the faith and the transformed and transforming life of the community of faith, than on the life and faith of the individual. The person is important; his/her faith and life are also important. But what is more important is that the will of God is done by the community as a whole, which as a community worshipping God the Holy Trinity and continually offers itself to God in faith and repentance through the Eucharist so that God may dwell in that community. We abide in Christ, and Christ, abiding in us transforms and transfigures the life of the members of the community in order that they become more God-like, and through the community pour out the life of God in order to give life to the world.

CHAPTER 3

How Different is The Eastern Orthodox Church?*

Several people have asked me that question in several different forms:

- Who are these Orthodox-Protestants or Roman Catholics?
- What do they believe differently from the others?
- What is the difference between Orthodox and other Christians?

Let me try some simple answers to these three questions.

Who are the Indian Orthodox?

First, both Roman Catholics and protestant are Western Christian groupings. The Orthodox Church is not Western Christianity. Eastern in origin, it was from the beginning open to influence from all cultures. In the first century Christianity was primarily an Asian-African religion. Only by the 4th century did the Roman Empire become increasingly Christian. The strength of Christianity in the early period was in Palestine, Syria, Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt, and Libya. We can make a list of the earliest Churches—the Churches of the first century.

| | |
|---|---|
| In the West, i.e. Italy | 2 Churches—Rome and Puteoli (today Pozzuoli near Naples) |
| Western Greece: | 5 Churches—Nicopolis, Corinth, Athens, Thessalonica and Philippi. |
| Eastern Greece (Asia Minor, today Turkey): | 15 Churches—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum imported |

*Article written in 1991.

Western heritage. Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, Troas, Miletus, Colossae, Perga, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe.

Syria and the East: 6 Churches—Antioch, Tarsus, Edessa, Damascus, Tyre, Sidon.

Palestine : 6 Churches, Caesarea, Jerusalem, Samaria, Pella.

Cyprus : 2 Churches, (Paphos and Salamis)

Egypt : Alexandria

Pentapolis (North Africa): Cyrene

India: Malabar

As you can see, only 2 out of 37 Apostolic churches are strictly Western. If Western Greece and Cyprus are also regarded as Europe, then nine Churches are in Europe, while 28 are in Asia and Africa.

The Orthodox Church claims to be the true successor of all these Apostolic Churches, including the Italian Churches, which used Greek as their language of worship in that century. So the Orthodox Church is neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant. It regards itself as the true and faithful successor of the ancient Apostolic Church, and regards the Western or Roman Catholic Church as a group that broke off and went astray from the true tradition of the Christian Church. The Protestant Churches broke off much later (in the 16th century and after) from the Roman Catholic.

The Orthodox are today in two families—the Oriental Orthodox family, to which the Indian Orthodox Church belongs, and the Byzantine Orthodox family, which is four times as large.

The Oriental Orthodox family has five Churches—India, Armenia, Syria, Egypt and Ethiopia—three in Asia and two in Africa. Total membership is over 25 million.

The Byzantine Orthodox family has over 100 million members in Greece, Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Western Europe, America, Australia and so on. Their members are mostly Slavic, Greek or Roman in origin. But they are also regarded as Eastern, though they are a bit less Asian African.

Thus the Indian Orthodox Church is a strictly Asian-African Church, an Apostolic Church in continuity with the ancient West Asian Apostolic Church. The Church was established in India in the very first century by the Apostle St. Thomas, one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ. It is one of the 40 or so ancient Apostolic churches of the world.

What do they believe differently?

The very question is a western one. In the West a Church is defined mainly by what it believes, i.e. by its doctrines and teachings. This intellectualist orientation of faith does not belong to the Eastern tradition.

The Orthodox confess the same faith as the ancient Church—the faith as was later formulated in the fourth century in the Councils of Nicea and Constantinople.

We object to certain later additions made by the Roman Catholics, for example the addition of the word '*filioque*' in the Latin creed. They, for example, teach that the Holy Spirit, one of the Three Persons of the Trinity, proceeds from the Father and the son ('*filioque* means 'and from the Son'). We do not teach so. The Son is begotten by the Father. The words "begotten" and 'Proceeding' delineate the difference between the Son and the Spirit in their relation to the Father. In later centuries, especially after the fifth century when the Western Church broke from the Asian-African mornings, it mis-understood the word 'proceeding' as related to the coming of the Spirit in the Church on Pentecost. This coming, of course, is from the Father and the Son, but that is not what is meant by 'proceeding'. The latter word denotes the eternal relation between the Father and the Spirit, and not the relation in time and history.

In the eternal dimension we cannot say that the spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Therefore '*filioque*' is out of place, wrong and misleading.

There are other doctrines and dogmas which the Roman Catholic Church has added to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed-e.g. the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the dogma of Papal Infallibility, and the dogma of the bodily assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The first two are wrong and third is not dogma, for the Orthodox. We do not believe that there is any special miracle called Immaculate Conception connected with the origin and birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Nor do we believe that the Pope or any other human being is infallible. As for the teaching about the bodily assumption of Mary, we do teach it, but not as some central dogma of the Church.

Nor do we believe that believing in the right dogma is the evidence of a true Christian. We put equal emphasis on the way of life, on the way of worship, on the way of disciplining oneself as on the way of thinking and belief.

What then is the difference between East and West?

It is not so easy to pinpoint the difference in words. It seems the difference is more one of ethos, of orientation, of spirit rather than of dogma or belief.

Let us state some of the more obvious differences. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, believes in a Universal organizational structure for the Church with one particular bishop, namely the Bishop of Rome or the Pope, holding a unique position in the whole world. We Easterners do not accept any one bishop as having universal jurisdiction or authority. So the Orthodox have no Pope. What they have is really an Episcopal Synod for each local or national Church. The President of the Synod may be a Patriarch, a Catholicos, and Archbishop or even a Pope as in the case of the Coptic Church of Egypt. But no such Synod or its president can have universal jurisdiction over the Churches of other countries. Each local or national Church with its Episcopal Synod and Catholicos or Patriarch is autocephalous, i.e., it has its own head, and does not look to any other Church to exercise authority over it.

This difference in turn is based on a more profound understanding of what we call the Church Catholic. The Church Catho-

lic is not the Roman Catholic Church. It is the whole Church, in all time and space, in its qualitative and quantitative fullness. The universal Church is not the Church Catholic. The latter includes all those who have ever lived on earth as Christians in former times, i.e., Christ and the Apostles, the prophets, martyrs, confessors, fathers, doctors, ordinary believers and so on. The universal Church is, of course, composed only of those now living. The Orthodox Church had no category called the universal Church. The attempt to create a category called the "ecumenical church" by the Constantinople Church, has been virtually rejected by the Orthodox tradition.

Now the Roman Catholic Church has something called the Universal Church, and the Pope is the head of this Universal Church. So, for them, the fullness of the Church means the Universal Church which is for them, the manifestation of the Catholic Church. Because they think this way, the local Church is only part of the Universal Church and cannot be autocephalous or having its own head. The local church is ever incomplete, according to this view, without the head of the Universal Church, the Pope, since the part is never complete without the whole. Hence the insistence of the Second Vatican Council that

"the college or body of bishops has no authority unless it is simultaneously conceived of in terms of its head, the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor.... Together with its head, the Roman Pontiff, and never without this head, the episcopal order is the subject of Supreme and full power over the Universal Church. But this power can be exercised only with the consent of the Roman Pontiff."
(*Lumen Gentium*: 22)

This teaching the Eastern Orthodox regard as rank heresy, and based on a fundamental mis-understanding of the relation between the local Church and the Church Catholic. The Easterners believe that the Church Catholic is *fully manifest* in the local church, where the people are in communion with the bishops of the Episcopal Synod. We do not regard the local Church as part, but as the manifestation of the fullness, of the Church Catholic. The error in the teaching of the Roman Church, we feel, is due to its breaking away from the tradition of the Church Catholic in the 5th century.

Neither does the Orthodox Church teach that the bishop or college of bishops alone exercise authority in the Church. Every baptised Christian shares in the kingly, priestly and prophetic authority of the Church, though the bishop has a certain fullness of spiritual power which others in the Church do not have. But the bishop separated from the Church is nothing. It is only in communion with the Church, with the college of presbyters and deacons and with the people that he exercises his power. The Orthodox Church is thus much more conciliar and communitarian in structure.

Neither did the Orthodox Church ever develop an aggressive or institutional mission such as Roman Catholics and Protestants have developed. The witness of the Orthodox is a quiet one, based more on worship and a holy life of love and service, than on preaching and proselytism. This lack of aggressiveness is often criticized by Western Christians as a lack of missionary fervour. But we know that the aggressive Western missionary movement is intimately linked with the economic, cultural and colonial expansionism of the west, and we would rather not be associated with such an aggressive and institutionalized mission.

The worship of the Church is the centre of the Orthodox ethos, rather than its mission. The mission follows naturally from true worship and feeds into it. It is in the eucharistic worship of the Church that the Orthodox have a foretaste of the Kingdom which is coming. To join with the angels and archangels in the adoration of the one True God and to rejoice his presence of the Spirit through the Son—this is the heart of the Orthodox ethos. The Orthodox Churches under Muslim or Communist oppression always survived because of this worship orientation.

The West separates action from contemplation, thought and prayer. For us it is in and from eucharistic worship that all action, contemplation, thought and prayer derive their significance.

CHAPTER 4

The Orthodox Church and Its Two Families*

The Holy Orthodox Church is one church. It appears divided. It does not have the organizational unity of the Roman Catholic Church. But the different Orthodox Churches are not different churches like the protestant denominations—A common tradition of faith and practice, —the Eucharistic, communion of Bishops and people—these are two pivots of Orthodox unity, not a single organizational structure with one supreme head.

The Two Families

The first major division in the church occurred in the period following the council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. The Eastern Orthodox Church became divided into two factions (we may more charitably call them 'families') from that time. Those Orthodox mainly Greeks, who sided with the Emperor Marcionandhsi and his wife Pulcheria, and also with Pope Leo of Rome, were called Melchites (supporters of the Malko-king). They were mostly attached to the Patriarch of Constantinople, which was both the Imperial Capital, and the new Centre of acute Greek nationalism. The Syrian and the Egyptians, as well as most of the people of Palestine, of Armenia, of Ethiopia and of the whole Persian Empire in the East refused to accept the Council of Chalcedon on the grounds (1) that it was dominated by the lay Commissioners of the Emperor and Empress; (2) that it was making alterations in the Nicean Creed which was unalterable and (3) that it was taught that Christ was "in two natures" after the Incarnation.

*Article written in 1967.

A much more important reason for the conflict was perhaps an Asian African revolt against growing European or Graeco-Roman Domination, both in the church and in the Empire. The strong feelings of the Asians and Africans against Greek and Latin domination later become the preparation for the advance of Islam in the areas of Asian African Christianity.

The period after Chalcedon marks the spiritual decline of the Christian Church, especially in Asia and Africa. But it also marked the very unexpected expansion of Eastern Christianity in the Persian Empire in Tartary and Mongolia in China and in India. Greek and Latin Christianity spread in Europe, while Asian African Christianity spread in Asia and Africa. In this process, two families of Eastern Orthodox churches were created, many of whom have not been directly involved in the Chalcedonian controversy. In the 13th century, the East Syrian Church alone (the Catholicate of Seleucia Ctesiphon in Babylon) had 230 dioceses grouped the way to Peking and Kerala. The African Church spread in Nubia (Sudan), Ethiopia, Libya and so on.

The Present State of the Afro Asian Church

What remains of this once great Asian African Church today?

1. The largest church in this group is that of Ethiopia, with some 14 million Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, presided over by the Patriarch, His Holiness Abuna Baselios, with his seat in Addis Ababa. The Church is divided into twelve dioceses and there is a bishop resident in Jerusalem.
2. The second largest is the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt with some 4.25 million members. The Patriarch is Anba Kyrillos.
3. The third in size is the Armenian Church with an estimated membership of 3 million. The head is Catholicos Vazhken, supreme Patriarch of all Armenians.
4. Next in size (fourth) is the Syrian Orthodox Church of India with about 1.5 million members, presided over by His Holiness, Mar Baselios Augen I, Catholicos of the East.

5. Last in size, but in importance of ancient tradition perhaps first is the Syrian Orthodox Church in the Middle East and in America, with a total membership of about 2,50,000. H.H.Moran Mar Ignatius Yakub III rules this Church from the throne of St. Peter in Antioch.

This adds up to a total 23 million members in the five churches, which accept only the three first ecumenical councils. They have no common head. According to ancient customs and the antiquity of the See, Seniority of honour is accorded to the Patriarch of Alexandria over the Patriarch of Antioch. The other three heads have not commonly agreed upon precedence of honour. The Patriarch of Alexandria is the **Prmus inter pares** (first among equals) of this family.

The Larger Orthodox Church

The other family of Orthodox, in communion with the Patriarchate of Constantinople and accepting seven ecumenical councils, is much larger in size.

1. The "Ecumenical" Patriarchate of Constantinople (in Turkey-membership about 8000) with its exarchates in Europe, America & Australia (total about 3 million). The Patriarch is His All Holiness Athenagoras, who met the Pope in Jerusalem some years ago. He is much more of a Co-ordinator of his family of Orthodox Churches than any of our Patriarchs. But he has no jurisdiction over the other autocephalous churches.

2. **The Church of Russia:** is by far the largest. Membership estimates vary from at least 25 million, to somewhere near 50 million. The Church began in the 9th & 10th centuries as a result of the work of the Greek missionaries, Cyril and Metodius. The country was Christianized by Emperor Vladimir in 988 A.D. (about 1000 years ago). The Patriarchate of Moscow was established in 1589 only. Present Patriarch Alexie became the head of the Church in 1944. There are about 50 dioceses.

3. **The Church of Rumania:** The people of this country were of the Latin race, was Christian from the 4th Century on, with a Latin Liturgy. It became Orthodox under Bulgarian rule (9th cen-

ture) and was later governed by the Patriarchate of Constantinople (11th century on). It became autocephalous in 1885. Bucharest became a Patriarchate in 1925, after the First World War. In 1944, Rumania was liberated from Hitler's forces, the Monarchy was abolished, and the country became communist without a bloody revolution. The present Patriarch Justinian presides over a Holy synod comprising five Metropolitan Sees, and 12 dioceses.

This flourishing church has 8568 parishes with over 9400 priests. There are 228 parish churches in the capital city of Bucharest alone. Each diocese has some 600-1600 parishes. Total number of believers is estimated at some 30 million. This is the second largest church of the Orthodox faith. Patriarch Justinian is a dynamic leader with remarkable organizing ability.

4. **The Church of Greece:** Greece is solidly Orthodox. Formerly, part of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. It became autocephalous in 1850. Its membership is between 10 and 12 million. About half a century ago a renewal movement began calling itself the Zoe (pronounced Zoyi), which has changed the life of the church quite considerably.

The Church has 66 dioceses, and the head of the Church is the Archbishop of Athens; now His Beatitude Hieronymos, himself is a great Zoe leader. The Church has some 175 monasteries, though many of these have only a few members. Of these 111 are convents for women.

Greece has a very small Catholic Church and a small Protestant Church. 95 per cent or more are members of the Orthodox Church. But in the cities, people are becoming more and more secularized. Many go to Church only for Easter.

5. **Bulgarian Orthodox Church:** It was in 865 A.D. that Bulgarian ruler become Christian, and imposed Christianity on the country. From its inception the Church was semi-autonomous. In 1767 it was brought back under the jurisdiction of Constantinople, when the Greek language was imposed on the Bulgarian liturgy. They regained their autonomy only by 1870, by the "firman" of the Turkish Government. The tension between the Greeks and the Bulgars was resolved only in 1945, when Constantinople re-en-

tered into communion with the Bulgarian Church. By that time the country had already become Communist (1944). The Communist Government forbade religious instruction, made civil marriage, compulsory, and took away all freedom from the church except that of worship.

In 1950 it was the Communist Government that decreed the church constitution making the Bulgarian church a Patriarchate.

The present Patriarch Kyrillos Markov was consecrated in 1953 against the protests of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The latter recognized the Patriarchate of Sofia in 1961, when this church along with the church of Russia became a member of the World Council of Churches.

The Church has eleven Metropolitans. This church probably has some 6 to 8 million members. It is difficult to say that this church is spiritually half as alive as the Russian or the Rumanian Churches.

6. The Serbia Orthodox Church: The Northern part of Yugoslavia (Croatia) is mostly Roman Catholic while the rest of the country are Orthodox. Though there were Christians in this area (called Illyricum in ancient writings), the Serbian Orthodox church was organized as such only in 1219. St. Sava, the first Patriarch was the brother of the first King of the Serbian nation.

The Church became fully autocephalous only in 1879. The present Patriarchate was constituted in 1920 by uniting four or five independent jurisdictions of the Orthodox.

The present Patriarch Gormanos resides in Belgrade. There are about 10 dioceses with some 2000 parishes. Some 300 theological students are in training for the ministry in three seminaries. Orthodox believers are probably about 10 million in number.

7. The Church of Cyprus: is as ancient as the Apostolic age, and was founded by St. Paul himself. The head of the church is Archbishop Makarios who is also Head of State. It was recognized as autocephalous by the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431. Despite a long Roman occupation (1191-1571),

this church is still solidly Orthodox. It has half a million members—about 80 percent of the population. Their liturgical language is Greek.

8. The ancient church of Sinai: Small in size, this is a very important ancient church, now in the territory conquered by Israel from Egypt. It is one of the three oldest existing monasteries in the world, all three of which are in Egypt, the other two (Dair Antonios and Dair Poulos) belonging to the Coptic Church. The monastery is said to be located at the spot where God appeared to Moses in the burning bush. This tiny autocephalous church has only a few hundred members, and is ruled by the Abbot of the Monastery who is also Archbishop of Sinai.

9. The Orthodox Church of Albania: This small church became autocephalous in 1929. They are out of touch with other Orthodox People. The head is the Metropolitan of Tirana, and there are three other diocese. The faithful probably number about 2,50,000. The liturgical language is Albanian. The majority of the people of Albania are Muslims.

10. The Orthodox Church of Finland has about a 1,00,000 members, and is ruled by an Archbishop. Liturgical language is Finnish. They have a strong orthodox youth movement. Majority of the people of Finland are Lutherans.

11. The Polish Orthodox Church: became autocephalous in 1924, under the Metropolitan of Warsaw. The majority of the people are Roman Catholic. There are four dioceses with half a million Orthodox. Liturgical languages are old Slavonic (Russian) and Polish.

The other Orthodox churches are listed below:

12. The Czechoslovakian Orthodox Church: autocephalous since 1951. Head Metropolitan of Prague—about 4,00,000 members.

13. The Greek Patriarchate of Alexandria: in Egypt a dwindling church consisting almost entirely of Greeks.

14. The Greek Patriarchate of Antioch: a considerably large church in Lebanon and Syria. The present Patriarch, His Beati-

tude Theodosius is quite a distinguished scholar, though he has been in rather poor health these days. His title is "the Patriarch of Antioch, the city of God, of Cilicia, Iberia, Syria, Arabia and All the East", but he like other Patriarchs of Antioch has to live outside of Antioch which is to-day in Turkey. His present seat is in Beirut, Lebanon. This church has five dioceses in Syria, six in Lebanon, one in Iraq, and four in North and South America. The number of Adherents in Syria and Lebanon is about 3,00,000 and perhaps half a million altogether. One important sign of new life is the Orthodox Youth Movement.

15. The Greek Patriarchate of Jerusalem: This is a small Church in terms of size. Since 1543 till now, the Patriarch has always been a Greek. All power is virtually in the hands of a few Greek monks in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, many of whom are bishops in non-existent Sees. This group regards itself more as the custodian of the Holy places than as a church of Palestinian Christians.

The Church gets its holy chrism from Constantinople. There are only two dioceses outside Jerusalem in Palestine most of which is now in Israel. But actually there are some ten bishops resident in Jerusalem. There is one Arab bishop. The parish clergy are mostly Arab. Membership is less than 1,00,000.

16. The Church of Georgia: An important and ancient church which should have been mentioned much earlier. They are the neighbours of the Armenians in the U.S.S.R. and were Christianized by St. Gregory, the Illuminator, and later by Syrians and Armenians. It was only many centuries after Chalcedon that this Church began following Greek customs, but they were related to the Patriarchate of Antioch long before Russia became Christian. It was annexed by the Russian Church in 1811 and became autonomous again in 1917, but by 1921 it was reassimilated by the Russian Orthodox. Only in 1944 it became autocephalous again. The head is the Catholicos of Tiflis. There are four other dioceses. Believers number around 2.5 million, more or less the same as the Armenians in Soviet Russia.

17. The Japanese Orthodox Church: This church was established by a Russian Orthodox priest in 1860. There were some

30,000 Orthodox Japanese in 1904. It became an autonomous Church in 1939. The first Japanese Orthodox Archbishop was consecrated in 1941. His wife became a nun on the date of her husband's consecration. There may be some 40,000 members now.

18. The Orthodox Church of North America: Virtually every Orthodox Church has a bishop in America. The Greek Archbishop, Lakovos, a president of the World Council, is the Exarchate of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The Russian Orthodox have an Exarchate under Metropolitan Joann. There is an emigre Church called "the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile" which is not a member of the World Council. The majority of Russians in the U.S.A. however, belong to neither of these, but to the "Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of America" to which belong St. Vladimir's Seminary and eminent Orthodox Theologians like Fr. Schmemmann and Fr. Meyendorff. The Melkite Syrians have their own diocese. So have the Serbs, the Romanians, the Bulgars, the Albanians, the Ukrainians, the Carpatho, Russians, and so on.

Conclusion

Contacts between the two families of Orthodox Churches have intensified in the past thirty years. These form a story in themselves and shall be the topic of a future article.

CHAPTER 5

Different Eastern Orthodox Churches*

1. The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

The Byzantine family of Eastern Orthodoxy, (The Eastern Orthodox Churches), a communion of autocephalous and autonomous Churches, believing the tradition of the seven 'Ecumenical Councils' (325-787) recognize the 'Ecumenical' Patriarch of Constantinople as first in rank among the Orthodox hierarchy. The main difference of the Constantinople family of the Orthodox Churches with the Oriental Orthodox Churches (the Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Syrian and Indian) is that the latter do not regard the Council of Chalcedon (451) and the three subsequent councils as ecumenical. The Patriarchate of Constantinople evolved in the history of the Christian Church when Emperor Constantine moved the capital of his empire to Constantinople, the newly founded city. Consequently, it enjoyed a position higher than the other ancient Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. Persecutions, inner conflicts and a multitude of ecclesiastical and political problems mark the transition from the glorious past to the present situation of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Patriarch Dimitrios I, the present 'ecumenical' Patriarch of Constantinople (successor of Patriarch Athenagoras) has his headquarters at Fener, Istanbul in Turkey. Now the following Eastern Orthodox Churches are in communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate:

1. Patriarchate of Alexandria, Egypt. (People: 5000) Head Quarters: Alexandria. Patriarch Nicolaos VI.

2. Patriarchate of Antioch, (People: 200,000) Syria: Damascus. Patriarch Ignatius IV Hazim.
3. Patriarchate of Jerusalem: (People: 2000) Jerusalem. Patriarch Benedicts.
4. Russian Orthodox Church: (People: 70 million) Moscow. Patriarch Pimen.
5. Serbian Orthodox Church: Belgrade (People: 7 million) Patriarch Germanos.
6. Romanian Orthodox Church: Bucharest (People: 18 million) Patriarch Justin.
7. Bulgarian Orthodox Church: Sofia (People: 8 million) Patriarch Maximos.
8. Orthodox Church of Cyprus. Nicosia (People: 20,000) Metropolitan Baselius.
9. Orthodox Church of Greece: Athens, (People: 8 million) Archbishop Serafim.
10. Orthodox Church of Poland: Warsaw (People: 20,000) Metropolitan Baselius.
11. Georgian Orthodox Church, Tbilisi (People: 3 million) Patriarch Illia II.
12. Orthodox Church of Czechoslovakia. Prague, (People: 20,000) Metropolitan Doroteji.
13. Orthodox Church of Finland. Kuopio. (People: 10,000) Archbishop Paaval.
14. Orthodox Church in America (recently formed) (People: 3 million) New York. Metropolitan Theodosius.
15. Orthodox Church in Japan (recently formed) (People: 6000) Tokyo. Metropolitan Theodosios.

2. The Russian Orthodox Church

Slavonic tribes were converted to Christianity in the ninth century as a result of the efforts made by Byzantine missionaries. The conversions of Princess Olga (955) and St. Vladimir of Kiev (988)

*Article written in 1982.

led to mass conversions and Christianity became the state religion in the region of Kiev. The Bible and liturgical books were translated into Old Slavonic language for which the missionary works and literary contributions of St. Cyril and St. Methodius in Bulgaria and among the Slavs in Moravia contributed much.

The son of King Vladimir, Yaroslav (1036-1054), built a Cathedral in his capital decorated by the best artists from Constantinople. This was followed by the erection of a multitude of church buildings and monasteries. But the Mongol invasion (1240) which isolated the Russians from Europe for several centuries seriously disrupted the organic development of the Russian Church.

The Metropolitanate of Kiev, established under Vladimir was dependent on the Patriarchate of Constantinople until the fifteenth century. Almost all the Metropolitans of Kiev were Greek who came from Byzantium, while the rest of the Episcopate and clergy were chosen locally. The Mongols, with certain exceptions were generally tolerant in matters of religion and allowed the Church to enjoy the privileges which it had enjoyed under the old Kievan regime. The history of St. Alexander Nevsky, the grand prince of Novgorod, (the only region not conquered by the Tartars) is so dear to the Russians, that making an alliance with the Mongolian Khan, he withstood the invasions from the West effectively. Swedish Crusaders (1240) and Teutonic Knights (1242) were defeated and the Church in Russia began to expand and organize. Monasticism began to play an important role in the course of this expansion. The Monastery of the Trinity at today's Zagorsk (founded by St. Sergius of Radonezh) are among a multitude of spiritual centres set up in Russia in this period.

Sacked by the Tartars, Kiev, the ancient capital of Russia ceased to be the residence of the Metropolitan. It was transferred to Vladimir and then to Moscow in the beginning of the 14th century. Moscow became the religious capital of all the Russians. The Russian Church proceeded to develop its own religious literature, liturgical texts, and iconography in the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This followed the establishment of the Moscow Patriarchate and the claim of Moscow to be the third Rome. The Russian Tsars and their general religious fervour con-

tributed much for the flourishing and spreading of the "official state religion," the Russian Orthodox Church.

By 1914 the Russian Church was constituted of nearly a hundred million faithful, divided into sixty-two dioceses. The 67 bishops in office were assisted by 82 auxiliary bishops, 50,105 priests and 15,210 deacons, 21,330 monks and 73,299 nuns. There were 1025 monasteries for men and 473 convents for women. The Church had a total of 58 seminaries with 20,500 pupils.

In the varied situations of today, after the Socialist Revolution and the World Wars, the Church is separated from the State and there is a ministry under the State dealing with religious affairs. The Russian Orthodox Church has now a membership of about 70 million believers in 80 dioceses, more than 100 bishops, about 18,000 priests and nearly an equal number of worshipping centres. The number of monasteries and women's convents come to about 18 and there are five theological seminaries and academies. The present Patriarch Pimen who succeeds Patriarch Alexy resides at Moscow. The Church's Information Department now employs some 150 people. The Church is supported financially entirely by voluntary contributions from believers.

3. The Romanian Orthodox Church

As a result of the colonisation and Romanisation of the Thracian people beyond the Balkan mountains the Romanian people came into existence on both sides of the river Danube. The historian, Eusebius of Caesarea (4th century) affirms that the apostle St. Andrew preached the gospel of Christ through parts of the Lower Danube and the Black Sea. In the following centuries the number of Christians increased in this area as a result of the relations between the Greek fortress of Scythia Minor (present Dobrogea of Romania) and the Christian world of the Near East, with the settlement of the Slavonic people on the Dacia Moesia territory (beginning of the seventh century). The Daco-Roman language differentiated itself from the popular Latin, taking Slavonic elements. The settlement of Bulgarians on the territory between the Danube, the Balkan Mountains and the Black Sea (7th century), their slavonisation, the formation of the Bulgarian state, their

Christianization (9th century) and the introduction of the Slavonic language into the Christian cult exercised a strong influence also on the religious life of the Romanians. The Romanians adopted the Slavonic language for worship during the 10th century.

Bishoprics were founded in the main cities of Muntenia, Moldavia and Transylvania in the 14th century which flourished and prospered during the following centuries. These bishoprics became great centres of Christian life and culture.

The autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church was recognized by the Patriarchal Decree of April 1885 signed by Patriarch Joachim IV and the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. In 1925 the Romanian Orthodox Church was elevated to the dignity of Patriarchate.

Miron Cristea, Metropolitan of Hungro-Wallachia became the first Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church (1925-1939).

Patriarch Nicodim Munteanu (1939-1948) succeeded him. Patriarch Justinian led the Church from June 1948 till his death in March 26, 1977.

Under Present Patriarch Justin, the successor of Patriarch Justinian, there are now more than 20 bishops in the Romanian Orthodox Church.

4. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church

It is believed that Christian communities were set up in the Balkan Peninsula during the first centuries of the Christian era. Slavonic tribes settled in the Balkan lands in the sixth and seventh centuries, and then the Proto-Bulgarians. By the last half of the ninth century a great number of Bulgarians had been converted to Christianity. Prince Boris adopted the Christian faith in 865 and then Christianity became the official religion in the Bulgarian State.

An Ecclesiastical Council held in Constantinople (from 5 October 869 until 28 February 870) created a separate church diocese within Bulgaria's boundaries and thus laid the foundations of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. At the beginning it was an autonomous archbishopric under the jurisdiction of the Constantinople

Patriarchate, for which it obtained its first Primate, its clergy and theological and liturgical books.

In 886, Saint Cyril and Methodius came to Bulgaria. This resulted in an awakening in Bulgarian literature, learning and culture. By the end of the ninth century the Bulgarian language had become the official language of the Church and State. A great number of churches and monasteries were built.

Because of military and political developments, during the second half of the tenth century, the Bulgarian Patriarchal See was moved successively from the capital Prestan to Dorostol, Traditsa, (today's Sofia), Voden, Muglen, Prespa and finally to Ochrid, which became capital of the Western Bulgarian state under Tsar Samouil. (976-1014).

Bulgaria fell under Byzantine domination in 1018 and Emperor Basil II acknowledged the autocephalous status of the Bulgarian Archbishopric of Ochrid. It continued to exist until 1767, when it was put under the Constantinople Patriarchate. At a church council convened in Lampsaki in 1235 presided over by Patriarch Geranos II of Constantinople, the autocephalous status and the Patriarchal dignity of the Bulgarian orthodox Church was affirmed.

When the Church fell under Ottoman rule in 1393, Patriarch Eftini was sent into exile and the Bulgarian Church was subordinated to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. In 1870 by a Firman (Decree) of the Sultan, the Ottoman government restored the Bulgarian Patriarchate.

As a result of the First World War, the Patriarchate became unable to elect its head after the death of Patriarch Joseph I in 1915.

Bulgaria witnessed the victory of a socialist revolution in 1944 and in January 1945, Metropolitan Stefan of Sofia was elected as the Bulgarian Exarch. The Church Council in May 1953 restored the Patriarchal status of the Bulgarian Church and elected Metropolitan Kirill of Plovdiv a Patriarch of Bulgaria and Metropolitan of Sofia. After the death of Patriarch Kirill on 7th March 1971, Metropolitan Maximos of Lovech was elected Primate of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

Today, under the Patriarch Maximos there are 11 dioceses within the boundaries of the people's Republic of Bulgaria. For the Orthodox Bulgarians in America, Canada, and Australia it has two more dioceses with seats in New York and in Akron, USA. The Bulgarian Parishes in Istanbul, Budapest, Vienna and Bucharest are also under the jurisdiction of the Bulgarian Church.

5. The Georgian Orthodox Church

One of the oldest of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Georgian Orthodox Church holds a tradition that the Apostles of Jesus, Andrew (the first-called) and Simeon the Canaanite came to Iberia (West Georgia) to proclaim the Gospel. The fact that Bishop Stratilat of Pitsund was a delegate to the first Ecumenical Council in 325, indicates that there was an Episcopate in West Georgia as early as the fourth century A.D.

St. Nino (4th century), a women Saint who arrived in Kartli (Central Georgia) from Cappadocia and proclaimed the Christian faith, attracted numerous followers including Queen Nana and later King Miriam. The King sent envoys to Byzantium requesting bishops for Georgia. The Georgian historian, Leonti Mroveli writes in the chronicle, *Kartlis Tskhovrea*, that Constantine the Great sent Bishop John, two priests and three deacons to Georgia. Anyhow, in the sixth century there were more than 30 bishops in the Georgian Church.

During the reign of Vakhtang Gorgaslan (Middle of the fifth century) the Georgian Church became autocephalous. Since then, the Head of the Church began to assume the title Catholics. The Metropolitan of Mtskheta assumed the title Catholicos Peter I (467-474). At a local Council held at Dvin (in Armenia) in A.D. 505, the Georgian Church together with the Armenian Church and the Albanian Church rejected the Council of Chalcedon. But later, under imperial pressures from the Roman Empire the Georgian Church, under Catholicos Cyrion I (600 A.D.) was forced to accept the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon.

The 'Thirteen Syrian Fathers' who came to Georgia in between A.D. 560 and 570 laid a strong foundation for the monastic movement in the Georgian Church. Also there are evidences for

a Persian connection which helped the flourishing of the Georgian Monasteries

During the reigns of such Christian monarchs as King David and Queen Tamara, Georgia became one of the most powerful states in the East and Ecclesiastical centres both inside and outside Georgia multiplied and flourished. The Gelati Academy, the Ikaltio Academy, the Monastery of the Cross in Jerusalem, The Georgian Monastery on Mount Sinai, the Monasteries in Antioch and the Georgian monastery on Mount Athos are some among them.

Georgia was captured by Russia in the 19th century and as a result the Church's independence was taken away by the Russian emperor. The Exarchate of the Georgian Church was formed after 1811. The First Exarch was Varlam Eristavi and all the other Exarchs until 1917 were Russians. After the Bolshevik Revolution of Russia in 1917, the Catholicate of the Georgian Church was re-established. Kyrion Sadzaglishvili became the Catholicos-Patriarch of all Georgia.

Ilia II, the present Catholicos-Patriarch of all Georgia who succeeds Patriarch Kallistras, Melchizedek, Ephraim and David is the 146th Patriarch of the Georgian Church. The Church has now about 3 million members and ten dioceses. The headquarters of the Church is situated at Tbilisi, the capital of the Socialist Republic of Georgia.

6. The Orthodox Church of Finland

The Finnish Orthodox Church, a small Church consisting of 1.3% of the population of Finland, celebrated the 60th anniversary of the independence of the Church and the 800th anniversary of the coming of Orthodox Christianity to Finland in 1978. The roots and the spiritual heritage of Finnish Orthodoxy take us back to the origins of Christianity in Novgorod and Russia.

The influence of Christianity began to spread into Karelia (the eastern-most province of Finland on the border with Russia), in the 11th century, apparently as a result of commercial journeys of Karelians to Russia. Missionary work was done on the shores of Lake Ladoga in the 12th and 13th centuries as a result of

which the famous Valmo Monastery was established in an island in Ladoga. This was followed by the founding of the Konevitsa Monastery (14th century) in Ladoga and of Petsamo Monastery (16th century) in Lapland.

In the 17th century, when Orthodox Karelia came under Swedish rule, attempts were made to convert the Karelians to Lutheranism. Consequently, a great number of Orthodox people were scattered. As a result of powerful cultural and national upsurge among the Finnish Orthodox people at the end of the 19th century, the Finnish language was introduced into services, and a bulk of Orthodox literature began to be published in the Finnish language.

In 1892 the Orthodox Diocese of Finland was established. After Finland had become independent in 1917, the Orthodox Church of Finland became autonomous, and this was recognized by Tikhon, the then Patriarch of Moscow. When, under the new conditions it became impossible to maintain contact with the Russian Church, the Finnish Orthodox Church became affiliated to the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1923, and since then it has constituted the Autonomous Archbishopric of Finland.

As a result of the Second World War, the Finnish Orthodox Church lost 90% of its property and 70% of its members had to leave their homes and were scattered all over Finland. In 1949 the Finnish Parliament passed a law on the basis of which the Church was reconstructed in the years 1950-60. During this time 13 Orthodox Churches, 42 chapels, 14 parsonages and 19 cemeteries were built at state expense for the new parishes.

Now, the Finnish Orthodox Church is the second national Church and is supported by the state. The headquarters of the Church is in Kuopio, the seat of Archbishop Paul the present primate. A Church museum and a theological seminary are situated at Kuopio. The Church is divided into three dioceses, the centres being in Kuopio, Helsinki and Oulu.

The New Valamo Monastery and the Lintula convent attract a lot of worshippers and tourists from all over the world. The Church has altogether (in 1892) 70 priests, 18 deacons and forty precentors.

CHAPTER 6

The Oriental Orthodox Churches

The Name

"Oriental Orthodox Churches" is the name given to a group of five autocephalous churches in communion with each other but not with the "Ecumenical" Patriarchate of Constantinople or with the Byzantine, Slavic and Latin and other Orthodox Churches in communion with Constantinople. The five churches are (1) the Coptic Orthodox Church-Patriarchate of Alexandria and the See of St. Mark (about 6 to 8 million members); (2) the Syrian Orthodox Church-Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East (about ½ million members); (3) the Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicossates of Etchmiadzin, and Antelias (about 3½ million members); (4) the Orthodox church of India-Catholicate of the East (about 1½ million members) and (5) the Ethiopian Orthodox Church-Patriarchate of Ethiopia (about 15 million members). They thus number about 26 to 28 million, to be compared with more than 100 million of the Constantinople family.

Common Features

The Oriental Orthodox Churches are also sometimes wrongly called Monophysites based on a western misunderstanding that the Oriental Orthodox believe only (monos in Greek means one and physics means nature) in the one divine nature of the Incarnate Lord Jesus Christ; also mis-named "Jacobites" on the again mistaken assumption that these ancient churches were started by Jacob Baradeus (ca. 500-575). They are rightly called Ancient Oriental Churches in so far as they have been faithful to the Tradition of the Church as it was before its Super-hellenisation in the Byzantine empire; also called "pre-Chalcedonian", since they refuse to acknowledge the Council of Chalcedon as an Ecumenical Council.

The Oriental Orthodox Churches take their stand on the Niceno-Constantinopolitan faith, and regard any creedal statement or dogmatic formulation beyond the Niceno-constantinopolitan creed as excess.

Recent unofficial conversations with the Constantinople family of Orthodox Churches have demonstrated the essential oneness of the Christological faith of all the Orthodox. Both sides affirm: (a) the full humanity and full divinity of Christ along with all the faculties and features belonging to divinity and humanity; (b) the four traditional adverbs: i.e. union of the two natures without confusion (*asugchutos*), without change (*atreptos*), without division (*adiariretos*), and without separation (*achoristos*); (c) the unity and double consubstantiality of the Incarnate Lord, i.e. *homousion toe Patri and homoousion hemas*, consubstantial with the Father in His deity and consubstantial with us in his humanity, and (d) the Virgin Mary as *Theotokos* or God-bearer.

Apart from the non-recognition by the Oriental Orthodox of the Council of Chalcedon (451) and of three subsequent councils regarded as ecumenical by the Byzantine Orthodox, the basic tradition of the Oriental Orthodox is the same as that of the Byzantine in ecclesiology, in understanding of ministry and sacraments, as well as in the teaching on the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

1. The Coptic Church

The Coptic Orthodox Church, a substantially large minority of the population in Egypt, in 40 episcopal dioceses, is ruled by the "Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark", the present incumbent (1981) His Holiness Shenouda III (117th successor of St. Mark) has recently been deprived of government approval and banished to the Amba Bishop monastery in Wadi-al-Natrun by President Sadat who was later assassinated. There are frequent conflicts between fanatical elements in the Muslim majority and the Christian minority. There is however much new spiritual vitality especially among the laity. The monastic movement which began in Egypt is experiencing a surprising renewal. Four monasteries in the Nitrean desert (al-Suriyani, Amba Makarius, Amba Pachom and Amba Mina), two in the eastern

desert (St. Paul and St. Antony), and the Muharraqi Monastery of our Lady near Asiat are the seven most active today, besides some five convents for women, most of them near Cairo. There was a special bishop charged with Ecumenical Relations and Social service (Amba Samuel), who has also played a large role in making the Coptic Church known to others and other Churches known to copts. He was also assassinated along with President Sadat. Bishop Samuel was a member of the Central Committee of the W.C.C., and had also given leadership to many ecumenical development projects in Egypt. The Coptic Church has been a member of the W.C.C. since 1954, and sent observers to the Second Vatican Council. The Church has established a Joint working Group with the Roman Catholic Church. There are five other bishops without diocesan charge, helping with the general ministry of the Church. It has two large theological colleges, one in Cairo and one in Alexandria, as well as an Institute of Coptic studies and a Museum.

The Church has recently revived ancient Coptic iconography in a creatively modern form. Attempts to renew Coptic architecture and music have had only limited success. The Institute of Coptic Studies in Cairo established in 1954 is giving leadership, more in research than in creating new forms. The liturgical languages are Coptic and Arabic. There are about 1300 Church buildings and some 2000 married priests.

2. The Syrian Orthodox Church

The smallest of the Oriental Orthodox Churches today, this Church is the inheritor of a magnificent Christian tradition in direct continuity with the Semitic Christianity of Jerusalem in the first century. Tracing its history back to St. Peter the Apostle and St. Ignatius of Antioch one of the Apostolic Fathers, it was this Church which produced St. John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia, Severus of Antioch and Jacob Baradeus, to name only a few. To its tradition belong St. Simeon the stylite and St. Ephrem Syrus.

Withstanding attacks from Byzantines and Latins on one side and Mongols and Turks on the other, the Syrian Orthodox Church, spiritually rooted more in Syriac Edessa than in Greek Antioch, the Patriarchate of the Syrian Orthodox Church has

often shifted its headquarters between Antioch, Damascus, Homs (Eddesa) and the monastery of Dair al-Zafranin Mesopotamia.

This Church has a very rich liturgical tradition, with some 90 different Eucharistic anaphorae, forms of the seven Canonical hours of prayer both ordinary and festal, at least three different baptismal liturgies, and an opulent holy Week Liturgy.

The present head of the Syrian Orthodox Church is His Holiness Ignatius Zakka who was enthroned in 1980. He was a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and is still very active in the ecumenical movement.

3. The Armenian Apostolic Church

Origins: King Tiridates (261-317) converted by Gregory the illuminator. Armenia became a Christian kingdom, and even when the Armenians lost their kingdom to conquerors Christianity has been their national religion. Armenian Bishop Aristaces was present at the Council of Nicea in 325. Catholicos Narses, who became Catholicos around 363 A.D. (consecrated in the presence of St. Basil the Great) reorganized the Armenian Church on a Cappadocian model, reformed the society, established, indissoluble monogamous marriage and strict monasticism, started institutions for the service of the poor and the sick. He was poisoned by the king who regarded him a rival. The division of Armenia around 390 A.D. into Persian and Greek empires caused difficulties for the Church which last to this day. But in the early 5th century in Persian-Armenia, Mesrob gave the Armenians an alphabet. Books beginning with the Bible and the Liturgy of St. Basil were translated into Armenian from Syriac and Greek.

The Armenians did not probably know about Chalcedon (451); but when they heard of it, rejected its decisions at the Synod of Divine (506) and again in 554.

The Arab invasion of Armenia in the 7th century only strengthened the church. Under Arab protection the Armenian Church became more deeply the symbol of Armenian identity; especially

since their repudiation of Chalcedon cut them off from Byzantine associations.

Under the Turks who replaced the Arabs the Armenians suffered. The climax was in 1914-1918 when 2 million Armenian Christians were massacred by the Turkish Government genocide attempt, second only to that against the Jews later.

On December 2nd 1920, Armenia became part of the Soviet Union as the Armenian Socialist Republic. Today the Head of the Church, Catholicos Vazgen I lives in Etchmiadzin, some 150 miles from the Armenian Capital Yerevan. Under his Supreme authority, there are the Armenian Patraichates of Constantinople and Jerusalem. The Catholicate of Cilicia has now established itself as an autonomous group with its own Catholicos, Karekin II is a well known ecumenical leader, and is Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee of the W.C.C. since 1975. Both Etchmiadzin and Antelias joined the W.C.C. in 1962. The total number of Armenian Christians today is estimated around 4 million.

4. The Orthodox Church in India

Also known as the Syrian Orthodox Church, traces its origins to St. Thomas the Apostle. The Indian Christians of St. Thomas became an autonomous part of the Persian Church around the 6th and 7th centuries; then under Portuguese colonialism they were forced into Roman obedience. The Coonen Cross revolt of 1655 led to the re-establishment of Orthodoxy, but this time in the west Syrian tradition.

The Thomas Christians are sadly divided today. The majority (about two million) are in the Roman obedience which was forced upon them in 1599, and constitute the Malabar rite in the Roman Catholic Church. The second largest group is the Orthodox, now divided into one jurisdiction directly under the Syrian Patriarch of Antioch with one Maphriana (Paulos Mar Baselios) and eight other bishops, the other much larger under the autocephalous jurisdiction of the Catholicate of the East (Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews) with 20 diocesan bishops and a total membership of 1½ million. A third group broke away from the Orthodox under Protestant influence around the middle of the 19th century, to

form the Reformed Mar Thoma Syrian Church (about ½ a million today).

The Orthodox Church in India has a well-trained leadership and was a founder-member of the W.C.C. in 1948. It has provided the ecumenical movement with some distinguished leaders. Its Theological Seminary at Kottayam is among the better Orthodox Seminaries of Asia.

5. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Origins can be traced to 4th century. Syrian-Alexandrian Christianity brought to Ethiopia, and witnessed to by all 4th century Church historians (Sozomen, Eusebius, Theodoret, Socrates), on the first hand authority of Rufinus who spoke to Aedesius, one of the co-founders with Frumentius of the Ethiopian Church. There may have been Christian settlements in Ethiopia before the 4th century; the Ethiopian Eunuch, Finance Minister of the Queen of Ethiopia was converted in the first century by Philip himself. The coming of the Nine (Syrian) Saints around 480 A.D. established the Oriental Orthodox or pre-Chalcedonian faith in Ethiopia.

During the Western and Arab incursions of medieval history, the Ethiopian church showed remarkable vitality, and the monolithic or rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, built around 1190-1225 bear witness to a flourishing Church.

In the 16th century Ethiopian kings were forced to seek Portuguese help to resist attacks of the Muslim Ahmed Granh, and this was the occasion for Latin Christians to mount "Ethiopian missions". The Pope consecrated even an Ethiopian Patriarch (Baretto) and two auxiliary bishops (Oviedo and Carneiro) and sent them to Ethiopia around 1560. Only Oviedo reached Ethiopia, and tried to force the Ethiopian Orthodox into Roman obedience, with the help of Portuguese troops. The patriotism of the Ethiopians was strong enough to resist even the inquisition which was exported to Ethiopia. There were subsequent attempts by Jesuits, Capuchins and other Franciscans. Only in the 19th century the Roman Catholics were able to gain a few "converts". Protestant missionaries also came in the 19th century, mainly

the British and the Swedish, and the Hermannsburg and Basel Missions which were international. The Protestants numbering about two hundred thousand are now largely united; most of them are converts from pagans and not proselytes from the Orthodox.

Till 1959 the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was governed by a single Egyptian bishop (Abuna). In 1959, the autonomy of the Ethiopian Church was recognized by the Egyptians, and the Amba Baselios was consecrated Patriarch. His successor Amba Theophilos, once a president of the All Africa Conference of Churches, is now in jail with two other bishops, allegedly for plotting against the present socialist government of Ethiopia.

The overthrow of emperor Haile Sellassie (1974) and the accession of the new Marxist military government has forced the Ethiopian Church to come out of its feudal past and face the present. All its landed property along with buildings were nationalized. The priests and monks who depended on the land for their support have now to turn to the masses and depend on their support. The Church has lost its privileged position, but is treated as equal to other religions and not persecuted.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, with its estimated 14 million members, is now completely autocephalous. The present Patriarch is Abuna Takle Haimanot, a traditional monk with very progressive ideas, but no modern education. There are some 20 bishops, in addition to the ones in jail. The number of priests may be around 100,000 not counting the choristers or debteras who may number 150,000. The Church is a member of the W.C.C. Their liturgical languages are Ethiopic (classical) and Amharic (modern).

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CHAPTER 7

What do the Orthodox Believe*

What do we believe? It is more important to ask: "in whom do we put our trust?" "Believe" is a very vague word. Often it means simply holding an opinion without demonstrable evidence. But our faith is not an opinion, not one of many possible views. It is an affirmation of what ultimate reality is-dependable, trustable reality.

We do not put our trust either in the ancient character of our Church or in any dogmas or doctrines. Our trust is in the One True God-Father, Son and Holy Spirit, eternal, self-existent, indivisible, infinite, incomprehensible, glorious, holy, not created or owing his being to something else, all-sovereign, Creator of the whole universe. All things are from Him. We too have our being from Him, acknowledge him as the source of our being. Of the being of all else, of all good and therefore worthy of adoration and praise perpetual.

About the First Person of the Trinity, the Father we know only what the Son and the Spirit have revealed to us, and still continue to reveal. The knowledge of God that matters is not conceptual knowledge or storable doctrine, but true worship in the community of Faith. True knowledge of God comes through the quality of our life than through intellectual clarification. Some things, however we can affirm conceptually, knowing well that these concepts do not fully conform to reality.

The True God is beyond all conceptual comprehension not only by human beings, but by any created mind. He is, in a way different from the way anything else in creation is. We know the True God, not because we have comprehended His being or is-

*Article written in 1976.

ness, but through His operations or activities, the energies of God which come down to us through the Incarnate Son and through the Holy Spirit. The Truine God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, share the same is-ness; their being is one-infinite, eternal, uncreated, self-existent, with three persons or centres of consciousness and response, always acting in concord and unison as one being. There is no gap or interval of time or space between the three persons; there is no senior or junior; greater or lesser.

We believe that Jesus Christ the Son of God became a human being, rules in the universe. All power in heaven (the aspects of the universe now not open to our senses) and on earth (that is, the universe in all-its tangible, sensible aspects) is given to Jesus Christ the God-Man. Death and Evil have been overcome, but they are still allowed to function, serving Christ's purposes. They will disappear—love and life will triumph—this is the faith of the Church, and this we affirm.

For us the Holy Spirit is Life-giver, Sanctifier and perfecter. We do think in terms of Sin and grace, but the central category in our understanding of salvation is the life-giving Spirit. It is He who effects forgiveness of sins, removes barriers between human beings as well as between them and God, gives life, makes people more holy and God-like, and draws us to perfection. He works in the Church, through His special gifts, to build up the body of Christ and to make its members holy. He also works in the Creation, bringing all things to their fullness and perfection.

While we do speak about these operations of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are not three Gods, but one God, we know next to nothing about His being as Triune God. It is important for us to confess the incomprehensibility of God. He is not to be discussed or explained, but to be worshipped and adored and acknowledged as Lord of all.

We believe in the Church, all who acknowledge the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed do. The Church is the great consequence of the Son of God becoming flesh. It is this community that not only bears witness to Christ, but also is the abode of Christ, Christ dwelling in the Church, which is His body. It is in the Church that the life-giving power of the Spirit is at work.

But the Church is not simply the community of believers gathered together. It is a reality which spans heaven and earth, the risen Christ himself as chief cornerstone, the Apostles and Prophets as foundation, and all who belong to Christ from Adam to second coming being members of this one, holy Catholic apostolic community.

The local Church is not a mere part of this one great heaven-and-earth community; it is the full manifestation of the One Church, especially when the community is gathered together with the Bishop for the hearing of the Word of God and for the Eucharistic participation in the one eternal sacrifice of Christ of the Cross.

We are never allowed to forget even in a small local church the presence of this great cloud of witnesses who share with us the life of the One Church. We remember at every Eucharist the departed as a whole, and especially the Apostles, great teachers, and spiritual leaders who have helped build up and protect the Church from error and deviation. It is not a law that we have to ask the Saints to intercede for us. We do it with great joy and genuine appreciation of their past and present role in the one Church of Jesus Christ.

Of the great Saints in the Church, the first (after Christ) and unique place goes to the Blessed Virgin Mary, for she was the first to hear the Gospel of the Incarnation of our Lord from the Archangel, and to receive Him, on behalf of all of us human beings, into her womb. She is the mother of Christ, and thus mother of all the faithful who are joint-heirs with Christ. But she is also the Theotokos, the Godbearer, for the one whom she bore in her womb was truly God himself.

For her, Jesus Christ was not an ordinary human being who was then adopted or exalted as son by God the Father. No, He is the Second person of the Trinity, who dwelt in the womb of Mary without being absent from the "place" of His eternal being. Jesus Christ is now fully God as he always was, of the same being as God the Father. He is also fully a human being, sharing our fallen human nature, but without incurring sin. His humanness and his Godness are inseparably and indivisibly united with-

out change or mixture. One divine-human Christ, one Person, with one united nature and faculties which combine the divine and the human. Our union with this divine-human nature of Christ is what makes us participate in the divine nature (2 Pet. 2:4; Hebrews 2:10-14) without ceasing to be human beings.

Salvation for us means more than escaping hell and going to heaven. It means separation from evil and growth in the good. It means eternal life with true holiness and righteousness. It means also being united with Christ in his divine-human nature, in his sonship and rule over the universe. It means becoming more and more God-like in love, power and wisdom. This is what the Holy spirit makes possible. What is humanly impossible becomes reality by the grace and power of God.

The participation in Christ's body and His being and nature becomes possible, by the grace of God, by the Holy Spirit, through the "mysteries of the Church" (*roze-d-idtho* in Syriac), which are called Sacraments in the West. These mysteries, mainly Baptism-Chrisation-Eucharist, are acts in the community of Faith by which the eternal and eschatological (i.e. pertaining to the last times) reality of our oneness with Christ becomes experienced by faith in the Church, in time, here and now.

There are other mysteries also—Confession-Absolution for forgiveness of sins for the baptized, an anointing of the Sick for deliverance from Sin and Sickness. Marriage too is a mystery of the Church, because it unites Man and Woman in an act of permanent mutual commitment and permanent union, reflecting the Union of Christ with His Bride, the Church, or of God with the new Humanity.

Another great mystery of the Church is *hierotonia* (or *hierothesia*) the special laying of hands for receiving special gifts of the Holy Spirit—for the Bishop as the mystery-presence of Christ the High Priest and Good Shepherd with His Church, and the related ministries of ruling elders (priests or presbyters) and serving ministers (deacons and deaconesses).

We hold the Bible in very high regard. The Gospel is the Word of Life, the proclamation of life and salvation to the world. We hold

the Scriptures in the highest respect, and no other writings can have the same standing, for the primary witness to Christ is in the Scriptures. We revere the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God, and all our prayers, as well as the services of the mysteries of the Church are saturated with Biblical reference, and always completed by the public reading of the Scriptures.

Icons are important for us. These mediate to the worshipping community the presence of the Saints, and of the saving events of our Lord's incarnate life. We do not make images of the unseen God. We consecrate icons to mediate to us the Godbearing persons and events which have been actually manifested to our senses.

For us Tradition is not something old, static, and life-less; it is the life of the Church as a counting body, with the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit in it. It is the Spirit that makes the Tradition alive and it bears witness to Christ; it also moves forward in expectation of the final fulfillment. Hence Tradition for us is dynamic. It includes knowledge of Christ, the teaching of the Apostles, the doctrine of the Saints and fathers, the practices of worship developed by the community of faith, its way of doing things and practicing love. Scripture is part of this tradition. Tradition is not just a body of knowledge, but a way of life and worship and service.

Our worship as a community is the centre of our life, not our own personal articulations of faith. It is there that the Church, united with Christ, participates in Christ's self-offering for the world. Our daily life flows out from worship and has to be a life of love and compassion, caring for the needy, struggling against evil, serving the poor.

Our hope is focused on Christ's coming again. It is only in that coming that evil would be separated from good, death from life, so that the good can triumph eternally and grow eternally also. In that coming there will be a reconstitution of the universe; all things shall be made new; evil shall be banished. Death and darkness would be finally overcome; light and life and love will triumph.

It is our task to bear witness to this final reality, while living it out here and now, as much as we can, beset as we are by sin and frailty.

Thy Kingdom Come Lord. And when Thou comest in Thy Kingdom, remember us poor sinners also!

CHAPTER 8

Central Concerns of the Eastern Orthodox Church

To an evangelical, it must be quite obvious that the central concern of any Christian Church should be the proclamation of the Gospel. In more recent times, the expressions "proclaim the gospel", "evangelise", "witness to Christ" have all been stretched in meaning to compass everything from refugee relief to revolutionary insurrection.

What about the Eastern Orthodox Church? Is she also concerned about *Evangelian*, and *Missio*? Or are the Orthodox withdrawing from all social concerns to become preoccupied with Liturgical worship alone?

To those who look at the Orthodox Church from the outside, especially from an Evangelical perspective, these questions seem quite legitimate, for they cannot see any great activist or missionary effort on the part of the Orthodox. What are really their Central Concerns? How do they understand the task of the Church.

The answers offered here are not meant to be either official or exhaustive. This represents only the effort of one Orthodox Christian to answer this question—logically, conceptionally, but within the limits of a brief article.

1. The Worship of the Church

Yes, worship is the primary concern of the Eastern Orthodox Church. But we may mean by that word something slightly different from what many evangelicals understand.

Worship is to be distinguished from preaching or prayer, though it may include both. Gottesdienst does not mean reading the

Bible, singing a few hymns and saying a few prayers. For the Orthodox, Worship is the most characteristic activity of the Church, without which it is no longer Church.

The central Act of worship is the Eucharist. It is the supreme act of the Church, and only the Church can offer the Eucharist. The Eucharist is participation in Christ's eternal sacrifice on Calvary. Without such participation there is no salvation for the world. The Eucharist is the baptized believer's mode of participation in the saving act of Christ. The Christian's relation to Christ's Cross cannot be in terms of a Psychological experience of faith or of an intellectual apprehension of truth. It has to be a sacramental act—i.e. an act of the Holy Spirit in the Community of faith, by which all members share in Christ's cross and Resurrection through actual bodily participation, involving all the sense and not just the hearing.

This may sound strange to those who have been brought up to believe that faith is engendered by the hearing of the proclaimed Word of God. There is proclamation in the Orthodox Church but the emphasis does not fall on the verbal *Vorkundigung*, but rather on the Eucharistic act commended by Jesus: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes". (1 Cor. 11-26). This mode of proclamation of Christ's Cross in the Eucharist is only for the baptized and anointed (Christified) believer, who is enabled to grow more and more united and conformed to Jesus Christ through this participation.

2. Cosmic salvation

The Eucharist, however, is not just for the believer's growth, just as the cross was not merely for the believer's salvation. Both are for the salvation of the world, the cosmos as a whole. God did not love some men and women, specially pre-destined, so as to give his Son for their salvation alone. He loved the world, and for the world the Son has been given the Cross.

The Eucharist, for the Orthodox, though they often forget this fact, is a sacrifice for the whole creation. The Syrian divine liturgy of St. John Chrysostom begins the offering with the words: "Con-

serve by Thy Grace, O Lord, this World". Elsewhere the priest prays in the Eucharist "For the whole creation, we offer unto Thee this bloodless sacrifice".

The continuous act of offering the Eucharist is the Church's fulfillment of her own priestly role. For the Church is a Royal Priesthood, a class of priests, who continually join with Christ the Eternal High Priest, in His ministry of intercession for the whole creation. The Church's Eucharistic act is thus the Creation's response of gratitude and self-offering to its creator. The Creation is multiple in form and the capacity of each form to respond freely to God varies. Inorganic matter responds less freely than the plants and the trees; the animals are more conscious, mankind even more than the animals; but the Church is more aware of the Creator than mankind in general. So when the church offers the "Sacrifice of praise and thanks giving" to the Creator, it does so on behalf of the whole of humanity, but also of the whole of animate and inanimate creation.

The Eucharistic offering thus restores the original relation of the Creation with its Creator, through Christ and the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Eucharist is not a mere teaching session for the edification of those who attend. It is the vital link between Creation and God. It is the highest response of the Creation to God.

The Orthodox place such heavy emphasis on the Eucharist that it may appear superstitious to many non-Orthodox. But this is part of the priestly role of the Church, to be the priest even of those who are ignorant or contemptuous of the great mystery of the Church and the Eucharist.

5. God made Manifest

The converse of representing the Creation before the Throne of God would be for the church to represent God before the hearts and mind of mankind. The mission of the church thus flows naturally out of worship. Only a Church which lives by the rhythm of eucharistic self-dedication to God on behalf of the Creation can truly become the bearer of God's saving Grace for mankind. The rhythm of worship is the matrix of mission. In worship, the Church herself is caught up into the saving work of Christ. She gives

herself to God in Christ, and God gives Himself to her in Christ—the two basic movements of the Eucharist are the movements of love. i.e. offertory or self-offering and Communion. The Church's God-bearing quality is thus regularly replenished in the Eucharist, and it is by living out this life in the world that the Church manifests God in the world.

God is good. In fact He alone is Good. This goodness is also holiness—or the indescribable transcendent character of God, which can be but partially manifested in the lives of men. God's goodness is basically, love, power (or freedom), and wisdom. Wisdom gives the knowledge of the good, freedom chooses the good and has power to perform it, and love is the manifestation of the known and possible good in the act of mutual self-giving.

This then is the second chief aspect of the task of the church—this manifestation of God's love, freedom and wisdom in the concrete realities of daily life. The proclamation of the good news of the kingdom is but one aspect, though an extremely important aspect of this total task of manifesting the life of God in the World. The Church declares God's central act in Christ through the preaching of the Good news of the kingdom. But this has to be carried out in the context of a God-bearing life in the world.

The real failure of the Orthodox Church does not appear to lie, at least to the present writer, in her missionary laziness, but rather in her unsanctified, power-hungry, quarrelsome, self-pre-occupied and selfish life in the world. It is not missionary organization that she stands most in need of, but rather evangelical simplicity and eucharistic sanctity in ordinary life, manifesting the love, freedom, and wisdom of God to mankind.

4. The Disciplined Community

How to develop this evangelical simplicity and eucharistic sanctity? The local congregation is meant to be the community which makes this kind of life—transformation possible, but alas, it seldom happens that way. The discipline of the Church is meant to be a help to grow closer to the image of God.

Baptism, Chrismation, the service of the Eucharist, the morning and evening prayers, the various feasts of the year, the five annual Feasts and fasting on Wednesday and Friday every week, acts of love,—all these are meant to effect a transfiguration in the ordinary Christian, so that he becomes more and more like Christ, a Christ-bearer, or one in whom Christ lives and manifests his life. The basic purpose of all the liturgical acts may be stated simply as participation in the life of Christ. Baptism means incorporation into Christ as a member of his body. Chrismation, or Anointment with Holy Chrism, which (unlike Confirmation in the west) is an integral part of Baptism, makes the Christian share in the anointed character of Christ as King and High Priest. Eucharist is participation in Christ's eternal sacrifice. The daily offices are participation in Christ's permanent ministry of intercession. The liturgical years makes one participate in the saving events of Christ's life—the annunciation, the birth, the baptism, the teaching and the healing ministry of Christ, the crucifixion, the entombment, the resurrection, ascension, Pentecost, the lives and martyrdom of the Saints who are also bearers of Christ who continued Christ's work in the world.

The discipline of the Church is thus meant to be a structure which enables the Christian to grow into the form and resemblance of Christ, who is the true image of God.

Social and Political Responsibility

The Eastern Orthodox Churches have seldom developed any articulate system of social ethics. Their relation to the so-called civil realm or secular world has never been clearly articulated. None of the different patterns provided by Richard Niebuhr—Christ over culture, Christ in culture, Christ against culture, etc.—would fit the Orthodox view in this matter.

The Eastern Orthodox approach to culture or to the life of the nations has to be understood historically. There have been different patterns, but they can be summarized under three headings—First is the situation where the head of the state is a member of the Orthodox Church and the majority of the population also belong to the same Church. The first instance of this kind was perhaps the city of Edessa in sub-apostolic times. Ancient

Byzantium is a classical example. Ethiopia still follows some-what in this pattern. The second pattern is that of a sizeable minority under a hostile ruler, say, for example the Greek or Syrian or Egyptian Orthodox under Turkish rule. A third pattern is that of a tolerated minority, such as the Orthodox Church in India where the Church fitted into the caste structure of Indian society and found its own place in the social set-up.

Both the second and third patterns have been largely uncreative in terms of the Church's transforming role in the society. The records show, for example that in India, the Hindu rulers entrusted the guarding and maintenance of just weights and measures to Christians—suggesting that Christians were perhaps more reliable and honest than non-Christians at this point. Most Eastern Churches, especially since the fall of Constantinople in 1453, have been under an oppressive Muslime Yoke, where the preoccupation has been primarily with self-preservation. The Christians may have led in education and administration, but rarely did they think in terms of their responsibility to transform the whole of society.

And about the first pattern? It is clear that the Church played a very effective and pervasive role in the transformation of society under this pattern. Whether we take Edessa, Nubia, Ethiopia, Armenia, or Georgia, there can be little doubt that the Christian Church shaped the culture in all its forms, language, literature, music, art, social legislation, criminal code, education, health—practically every aspect of life.

Corruptions of the role of the Church could also be observed in large and powerful states with large and powerful churches like Byzantium as it developed from the 4th to the 15th centuries, in Czarist Russia.

There never was a tendency, in any of these cases, to think of the Church and State as two different entities. The Emperor was as much part of the Church as of the state. The membership of Church and State was practically co-terminous, and there was no tendency to distinguish between the Church and the State by projecting the institutional reality of the State to the civil officials and of the Church to the clergy. "Separation of church and

State" was totally unimaginable. Nor did each person regard himself as belonging to two different kingdoms, with distinct obligations to each. The State and the Church together were one reality. The State was temporary, whereas the Church belonged to all ages.

In spite of the many corruptions this was not an altogether bad formula. The formula cannot be understood in terms of the western concept of Christendom—a net-work of princedoms ruled by the Vicar of Christ. No, the Church was a transcendent reality stretching across times and space, and had its own continuous, universal, unchanging tradition, whereas the State could change its rules according to the strength and authority of the rulers. Only when these rules conflicted with the principles of the Church did it have to interfere.

In this manner, the Church was behind the Theodosian Code, or the laws of Justinian which had such a role in humanising European and middle Eastern society. There was such an identity between the civil and ecclesiastical society that the two could hardly be distinguished.

This was a strong position so long as the Church was spiritually alive and the rulers were Orthodox. But in modern times the pattern has practically broken up. Most of the Orthodox national churches are under Communist rule, and the identity of Church and State has completely broken down. The Church has to find a new identity under extremely difficult and challenging conditions.

The lack of vitality of the church is most evident in the emigrant communities of Orthodox in Western Europe and on the American Continent. Rooted out of the time of Church-State identity, and transplanted from the soil where a long chain of continuous tradition eliminated the need of choice to a large extent, the Eastern orthodox Communities in the East have clung to the cultural forms with desperate favour. They have been unable to disentangle their national identity from their Christian faith, and so have tried to hold blindly to many archaic traditions of a national culture quite unnecessary for maintaining a Christian commitment in a new Western culture.

The anomaly of Eastern Orthodoxy is precisely in this inability to disentangle the ethnic from the Christian, as a consequence the Orthodox are badly divided amongst themselves. There may be eucharistic communion between the Greeks and the Russians, for example, but very little love. Even on the American continent the various national Churches—Russian, Greek, Byelorussian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Carpatho-Russian, Albanian and so on—remain locked up in their own cultural past, unable to open themselves fully either to each other or to the challenging possibilities of an open western culture.

Orthodoxy holds the pure tradition of the ancient undivided Church. But because of its ethnic group egoism remains incapable either of enjoying their rich spiritual heritage or of sharing it with others.

There is a new generation of young Orthodox in the West who see the problem and are already beginning to do something about it. To them the better spirits in the Orthodox world look with hope.

6. Prospects

The disunity of the Church is Orthodoxy's greatest problem today. But behind this lies what may be called an "eclipse of the Gospel". In its preoccupation with the responsibility to maintain the tradition and preserve the Church, many Orthodox Church leaders forget the purpose for which the Church exists—namely to manifest the goodness of God in love, wisdom, and power. The gospel is the primary and central element of the Tradition, but the emphasis often falls on these elements in the Tradition where the East has something distinctive, to the detriment of those key elements which are common to East and West alike.

The failure of love is thus part of this eclipse of the gospel. Ethnic particularly now becomes a symptom of this failure of love rather than a way of manifesting the concrete reality of God's goodness.

What are the hopes for the future? One regrets to say that the hopes are not as immediately evident as the fears and the frustrations. Yet one must dare to hope against hope, for it is

Christ who has maintained the Eastern Church through the centuries as a living memorial of the reality of the one undivided Church.

This hope has several aspects. First, there is the hope that the several ethnic strains within Byzantine Orthodoxy would soon be reconciled. If the Slavs and the Greeks can transcend the un-Christian aspects of their ethnic egoism, Orthodoxy can already become a vital force in the world of today.

Second, within the realm of possibility is the reconciliation of the two great families of the Orthodox who have not been in communion with each other since the fifth century. The Oriental orthodox, or the ancient Oriental Orthodox as they are sometimes called are in five national Churches—the Syrian, the Egyptian, the Armenian, The Ethiopian and the Indian—which are in communion with the Constantinople family of Orthodox. They were divided in the fifth and following centuries, as a consequence of the Council of Chalcedon. They are about 20 to 25 million in number, and maintain much more of the variety of the ancient undivided Church than the Byzantine Orthodox who became modelled on the exclusive tradition of Constantinople. These ancient Oriental Orthodox are no longer regarded as heretics. In fact they never believed, as was often alleged, that Christ has only one nature, namely the divine. They have always held that Christ was fully human and fully divine, but that the nature of the Incarnate word cannot be divided into two separate natures.

The Coptic and the Indian churches are showing considerable vitality. The new Patriarch of the Coptic Church, Anba Shenouda is a young man, deeply spiritual, well educated, open to the world, creative and active. Restoration of Communion between the Constantinople Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox (*Oriental Orthodox*) can bring some new stimulation to both sides.

A third possibility is the rise of a new generation of priests and bishops who see the problems of the contemporary world in all its stark reality, and can bring the healing balm of the ancient Christian Gospel to bear on it. What the Orthodox need today is to combine modern education with ancient Christian spirituality in

the leadership. This can take place only through a new kind of monastic community. There are no signs of such a monastic renewal in any of the Orthodox Churches. Monks and nuns are young and numerous in Romania, but their active life is not under guided by adequate theological and spiritual formation. There are educated monks in the desert valley of the Coptic Church, but they are too tied to the ancient traditions of Antony, Pachomius and Shenouda to be effective enough in facing the problem of the western world.

There is almost a consensus among Orthodox visionaries that a new monasticism is the way to renewal. But the team has not yet come forward which can successfully experiment with the idea.

What about ecumenical relations? Practically all Orthodox Churches are members of the World Council of Churches. Only the Albanian Church has not yet applied for membership. Patriarch Germanos of Yugoslavia is one of the Presidents of the W.C.C. Professor Nissotis of the Church of Greece and Fr. Borovoi of the Russian Orthodox Church hold influential positions in the Geneva staff. But one cannot say that the Orthodox are very happy in the membership of the World Council. A western protestant ethos, Craft of liturgical symbolism and ritual richness characterised by an arid non-metaphysical intellectualism and a superficial, though humanitarian activism, appears to dominate the W.C.C. and the Orthodox feel ill at ease. Much depends on the new General Secretary (to be elected this summer) who may perhaps be alert to this problem and willing and able to do something radical about it.

With the Roman Catholics Orthodox relations have been blowing hot and cold. Pope John attracted the Orthodox by his sincerity and modesty. Only Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople has been able to continue an intimate personal relationship with Pope Paul. Other Orthodox seem to think that the Pope regards Athenagoras as the Pope of the East, and this even the Greeks have refused to concede. In fact that too close relations between the Ecumenical Patriarch and Pope Paul have created major disruptions within the Greek Churches themselves who have a very

strong anti-Roman tradition and memory. The Russian Orthodox have recently tried to build better relations with the Vatican. The Syrian Patriarch Ignatius Yaqub and the Armenian Catholicos Vazgen have recently visited the Pope and issued very friendly joint statements. None of these are however, to be interpreted in the sense that the issues between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholicos are on the way to settlement. The significant thing is that caricature and polemics have now given way to mutual respect and dialogue.

The Eastern Church lost its leadership of the world Church around the 5th century. Only an intellectual and spiritual renewal can restore some of that world leadership to these ancient Churches.

CHAPTER 9

The Ethnic Character of Orthodoxy

It is perhaps embarrassing to ask: How many non-Malayalees are members of our Church? We have large congregation in Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and many other cities outside Kerala. But all these are colonies of our people from Kerala, belonging to the ethnic group of Syrian Christians.

But this phenomenon is not peculiar to our Church alone. There are few non-Russians in the Russian Orthodox Churches in Russia or abroad and few non-Greeks in the Greek Orthodox churches.

This is not the case with Catholic and Protestant Churches. Wherever they go, they have broken out of their ethnic bounds to assimilate individuals and groups from other cultures.

How do we account for this interesting difference between Western and Eastern Christianity today? To say that the Western Churches are more missionary-minded would not be sufficient explanation. The Eastern Churches have all been intensely missionary right up to the tenth and eleventh centuries.

There is another possible answer. The basic difference seems to lie between the kinds of missionary activity which characterize the pre-eleventh century missions and the modern Western missionary movement. The earlier missions, except perhaps in the first three centuries, were directed towards whole peoples, while the modern movement is primarily addressed to individuals.

The earlier missions, often started with the king or ruler of a nation, and when he with his family accepted the faith, his people followed suit. This was true of Ethiopia, of Russia as well as of several western countries.

The modern missionary movement cuts out individuals and small groups from a community and establishes a minority Church within the community.

In the earlier missions, the Church and the community became identical. In the modern movement there is tension between the Church and the national community.

But this possible explanation may or may not justify the present conduct of the Orthodox Churches. For example take the Orthodox Churches in America. There are all varieties of Orthodoxy represented there. The Serbs (Yugoslavs) and the Russians have the same faith, the same liturgy, and the same liturgical language. But in the same town you find a Serbian Orthodox Church and Russian Orthodox Church. Why is it not possible for the two to merge into one church? Simply because the communal loyalty is stronger than the loyalty to the Church as the Body of Christ.

The problem and the solution has been present from the beginning of the Christian faith. The first major conflict in the Christian Church began on this ethnic basis. The Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians could never get along with each other. And yet the early church refused to take the easy way out—namely to have two distinct Churches, one Jewish and the other Greek. The Apostle Paul fought a very fierce battle to keep the oneness of the Church.

The real tensions broke out after the time of Constantine (after Nicea, 325 A.D.). Before that rarely had a whole people become Christian. Eddessa may have been an exemption. When Christianity came to have the official approval of the Roman Government, then the tensions also began. Upto the 4th century, the Church seems to have had no real permanent centre, or over-all Patriarch. Jerusalem, which could have become such a centre, was destroyed in 70 A.D. Antioch and Ephesus were centres so long as the Apostles lived. Rome had no central authority over other churches even when St. Peter and St. Paul were there. And yet the Church was one.

Between the death of the last Apostle (St. John died about 100 A.D.) and the conversion of Constantine, the Church remained

without any general administrative machinery. The Bishop in each place was the centre of the Church, and so long as the Bishops agreed with each other, the church was one. Certain bishops had special honour given to them, like the ones in Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome, but there were no "Patriarchs" as such. No bishop had any administrative authority over other bishops, though some had extensive jurisdiction over a whole province.

The special honour given to these four bishops had different reasons. The claims of Jerusalem as the city in which our Lord ministered were obvious. Antioch was the seat of the Apostle, but was also a great city, the capital of the Eastern province of the Empire. Rome was also blessed by the presence of some of the Apostles, but its main claim to honour came from its being the Imperial City. Alexandria was the second largest city of the Empire (after Rome) famed for its university and its splendid buildings, and was besides the capital of the African province of the Empire. It was also the centre of the corn trade which supplied the food needs of the whole empire. It had little claim to Apostolicity and could only invoke the name of St. Mark who was not one of the Twelve.

Constantinople had not been built at the time of Nicea. Their great Metropolitan bishops, Rome, Alexandria and Antioch had their powers enhanced and their jurisdiction over wide areas confirmed at Nicea. And with that the struggle for primacy begins. At Nicea, Rome and Alexandria are equal. Antioch comes next in honour and then Jerusalem.

And this could be said to be the beginning of national rivalries within the Church. The purpose of Nicea in the mind of Constantine was to ensure the oneness of the Empire by facilitating the Unity of the Church in one faith. In faith they agreed. But the jurisdictional question began to come to the fore when State support was assured.

The fights, often using force, violence and trickery, between the rival Metropolitan Sees in the Church soon become identified with national and regional loyalties, and we have generally still been unable to break out of this.

In later history when countries began to be invaded by enemy troops, it was the Church that cemented the solidarity of the country and inspired their resistance.

For us in India too, especially with the coming of the Portuguese, Church and community became identified, and to defend the Church against aggression, became synonymous with loyalty to the community.

And this has made us self-centered as churches. Our concern today is less with Jesus Christ and His righteousness, than with the glory and honour of our community. So we become closed communities, rather than churches open to all men.

How can we break through this wrong understanding of the Church? If we do not, we are betraying the grace of our Lord.

I humbly suggest a few directions in which we should move.

1. **Language :** We are ahead of almost all the Orthodox Churches of the World in using our own modern vernacular as the liturgical language of the Church. No other Orthodox Church has so far been able to do this to the same extent as we have.

Yet in areas outside Kerala, do we have to insist on Malayalam always? Can we have a Tamil Eucharist at Tadagom or Madras, a Bengali one in Calcutta, and Hindi or English in Delhi and Bombay? This would make it possible for non-Malayalees to enter into the riches of our heritage and thus help us to break out of our ethnicism. I am not suggesting that all our services in Calcutta should be in Bengali. But once a month, can we have a Qurbana in which at least the Scripture reading and the longer prayers (Proemion, Sedra and the Tubden) are in Bengali? Can our Episcopal Synod consider something like this? Can our priests and deacons learn enough Bengali to do this?

2. **Retreats and Conferences:** Can we have some conferences and retreats in Bengali at our Church? Can we invite some non-Orthodox and perhaps some non-Christians to these conferences?

3. **Literature:** Could we have some literature produced about the faith and practice of our Church in Bengali, and perhaps also attempt an occasional bulletin with questions and answers?

I am only saying these in the hope that the Church in Calcutta would show a way to the whole church to break out of its narrow ethnical confinement. The final decision depends upon the Episcopal Synod, the leaders and people of our Church there, and on the boundless grace of God who is always willing to give more than we dare ask for.

CHAPTER 10

Ecclesiological Issues Concerning The Relation of Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches*

In a perceptive paper presented at the Bristol Convention in July 1967, Professor Gerasimos Konidaris drew attention to the position of the Orthodox Churches in communion with Constantinople on "The Inner Continuity and Coherence of Trinitarian and Christological dogma in the seven ecumenical councils".

What was most interesting in his treatment was the division of the Seven Councils into two parts. Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381) belong to the first part—the latter especially was a positive achievement of the "Greek-Christian" spirit in clarifying the Trinitarian and christological dogma. The symbol of the faith is now finalized; no further changes are to be effected.

The five later councils including Ephesus (431) Chalcedon (451) and the three subsequent ones, belong to a different class. They regard the symbol of the first two councils as unchangeable. Their task is to further elucidate it, not to reformulate the symbol as was finalized in the perfect Greek of St. Gregory of Nyssa in 381.

This insight of professor Konidaris is of central significance for the relation between our two churches. We can all agree that the formulations of Nicea and Constantinople have a unique and final quality which is safest not to tamper with.

These documents were prepared by fathers who are common to our Churches. They were not all necessarily Greeks by

*Article written in 1970.

ethnic origin or nationality. It is important to point this out. Most of these fathers came from the Churches of Africa and Asia, from what later became the Patriarchates of Alexandria and Antioch. The chief among the fathers of the three councils. Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria and the Cappadocians came from Egypt or Asia Minor. There is no reason to claim that only the Greek church understood them and their terminology. The literate people of Asia and Africa were at least as capable of using Greek terminology as Indians and Americans are capable of using English terminology today.

But the more important point is the inviolable character of the formulation of faith of the first two ecumenical synods. Once this point is adequately grasped by the two sides, some of our ecclesiological differences become capable of finding resolution.

The question then is, historically, what did the third Ecumenical council, i.e. of Ephesus (431) do, what did the Council of Chalcedon (451) do, in relation to the first two councils?

In the case of Third Council, there was a clear heresy against which the council proclaimed itself—that attributed to Nestorius, Archbishop of Constantinople. The Alexandrian Church led the attack against this heresy as in the case of the Asian heresy more than a century earlier.

They condemned Nestorius and the heresy ascribed to him that in Christ there are two distinct *prosopa*, two distinct persons—one human and one divine. Whether Nestorius taught this or not, it is a heresy, and the Church still condemns this teaching. In this sense the decision of the Third Council is of high doctrinal value, and clarifies the creed of Nicea-Constantinople.

The case of the Fourth Council seems to be different in several ways. In the first place, the heresy to combat which the council of Chalcedon was held is still unknown. If it was to condemn the doctrine of Eutyches, we neither know what Eutyches taught nor who followed him in his teaching. On the assumption, however, that there was a heretical teaching which held that the human nature of Christ was not consubstantial with ours, or that it was ascribed by his divine nature, those who accept Chalcedon

and those who reject that council agree that Christ is consubstantial with us in his humanity and that the human nature with all its properties and faculties remains distinct and unabsorbed in Christ. We also agree in condemning Eutyches on the assumption that he denied the double consubstantiality. It is clear that on the non-Chalcedonian side we do not do this on the authority of the Council of Chalcedon.

It is because our own tradition is authentic and true that we affirm the double consubstantiality and the united divine-human nature of Christ. We are happy that both those Orthodox Churches in communion with Constantinople and even our Roman Catholic friends accept this double consubstantiality. In this respect all of us adhere to the one authentic tradition, even when some of us do not accept the council of Chalcedon. This means that for us Chalcedon is not an essential element of the authentic tradition, and as far as we are concerned, other churches can also reject Chalcedon and still be in the authentic tradition.

This is not the case with the Third Council. The Church of the East rejects the Third Council of Ephesus (431). As a result, Nestorius as well as Theodore and Diodore, whose teachings have been condemned by the authentic tradition continue to be operative in the church of the East. If the Churches of our non-Chalcedonian family were now to seek communion with the Church of the East, the acceptance of the Third Council, or at least the major teachings of that council, would be a necessary condition. The *Theotoko* formula and the one *prosopon* formula would also have to be insisted upon—If these doctrines are accepted, we may not insist on their acceptance of the Third Council, but would find our unity on the basis of the Kerygma of Nicea and Constantinople supplemented by a formal repudiation of the two-prosopa doctrine and by the affirmation of the Theotokos formula as well as a Christology of the hypostatic union.

This basic difference between the nature of Ephesus 431 and Chalcedon 451 needs to be further discussed among our churches. The reason why we have not included the church of the East in the meetings—the only oriental church to be so kept out of our conversation—is simply that there are real Christological differ-

ences between them and us. While among ourselves we find ourselves in basic agreement about our christological positions. It is not inconceivable that extended theological conversation with the Church of the East will reveal that they too affirm the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ and thereby do in fact affirm the single *proposopon* and that Mary was truly the bearer of the God-Man.

If this were to be the case, then the Third Council as such need not be an obstacle, though condemnation of the heresies which Ephesus 431 condemned may still be necessary to restore communion between us.

It is because some of us have now become convinced that in affirming the two natures of Christ, the Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches to affirm also the hypostatic union and all the "four adverbs", that we are no longer afraid of pursuing further the possibility of restoring communion between our two families of Churches. Professor Tsonievsky of the Bulgarian church was basically right in referring to "the non-Chalcedonian fear"... "that the Orthodox (i.e. Chalcedonian) Church has departed somewhat from the decisions of the Third Ecumenical Council against Nestorius and that it has introduced certain Nestorian elements into the faith"—The fear was actually there and is only now being dispelled; just as the fear is being dispelled also on the Chalcedonian side that we who stand firmly on the three ecumenical councils, in rejecting the council of Chalcedon, were affirming something less than the full human nature in Christ.

It is now possible for us to do what Prof. Tsonievsky asked us to do, namely that we "must stop accusing the Council of Chalcedon of Nestorianism", especially if we take Chalcedon as corrected by the Fifth Council and its interpretation of Chalcedon.

We can also agree that even the Chalcedonian Churches should not separate the Fourth Council from the Fifth. We are not able to say, however, that the sixth and seventh Councils of the Chalcedonians are organically or integrally related either to the Fourth and Fifth or to the first three. It was the Fifth Council that could dispel our doubts about the Fourth. For in first refusing to condemn the teachings of Theodore, Theodoret and Ibas, the

Roman church at least among the Chalcedonians gave ground to our suspicion that Chalcedon actually did have some Nestorian implications. It took quite a bit of time for Vigilius to accept the fifth Council. If the Decretal Epistle of Vigilius* is genuine, the Pope admits he was wrong in defending the Three Chapters. It is such defence of the three chapters and of teachers like Theodre, Theodret and Ibas by a large section of those supporting Chalcedon that made Chalcedon itself suspect. It is also a historical fact that despite the retractations of Pope Vigilius (554/555) and the confirmation by his successor Pelagius I of the Acts of the Fifth Council, that Council was bitterly opposed in the whole of Northern Italy, in England, France and Spain, and also in parts of Africa and Asia. Milan was in Schism till 571 when the Henoticon was published. In Istria the schism continued for a century and a half. Even today opinions crop up in western theological manuals which give rise to fears that Nestorianism is still not quite dead among the western Chalcedonians.

The Third Council of Constantinople, called the Sixth Ecumenical (680-681), enumerated in its decree and "piously gave its full assent to the five holy and Ecumenical Synods". This decree also specifies the particular heresy or heretic against which each council is convened. Chalcedon was against "Eutyches and Dioscurus, hated of God", while the Fifth Council was against "Theodore of Mopsustia, Origen, Didymus, Evagrius, and the writings of Theodoret against the Twelve Chapters of the celebrated Cyril, and the Epistle....by Ibas".

We were not there, the non-Chalcedonians. If we were, we would probably have liked to find out what was the heresy of "Dioscorus, hated of God". Until we find out, there cannot be the question of our accepting the Sixth Council as being in any sense in the right tradition. The condemnation of Didymus and Evagrius must be for their Origenism. That is a question which we need to examine further. There is a whole series of others condemned by the Sixth Council for their supposedly Monothelete views—the Sixth Council for their supposedly Monothelete views—Theodorus of Pharan, Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul, Peter, Pope, Honorius, Cyrus of Alexandria. Macarius of Antioch and Stephen.

*Patrologia Latina (Minge).

They are accused of affirming "one will and operation in the two natures of Christ our true God". I am not sure which is the true heresy to which these men adhered—that of "two natures" or of "one will and operation". Their heresy is regarded as being "similar to the mad and wicked doctrine of the impious Apollinaris, Severus and Themistius". Putting Apollinaris and Severus in the same bracket shows how little the sixth synod understood their thought. Themistius of Alexandria on the other hand so strongly affirmed the humanity of Christ as to attribute ignorance of certain matters to the human soul of Christ.

If acceptance of the sixth council thus means our agreeing to condemn Dioscurus and Severus, for us true teachers of the Authentic tradition, then we must choose the two fathers mentioned in preference to the sixth council which appears to us badly muddled, not to say in grievous error.

Its *horos* or dogmatic definition we find interesting. The first part of this *horos* reads:

"Our Lord Jesus Christ must be confessed to be very God and very man, one of the holy and consubstantial and life-giving Trinity, perfect in Deity and perfect in humanity, very God and very man, of a reasonable soul and human body subsisting; consubstantial with the Father as touching his Godhead and consubstantial with us as touching manhood; in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; begotten of his Father before all ages according to his Godhead, but in these last days for us men and for our salvation made man of the Holy ghost and of the Virgin Mary, strictly and properly the Mother of God according to the flesh; one and the same Christ our Lord the only-begotten Son of two natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, inseparably, indivisibly to be recognized, the peculiarities of neither nature being lost by the union but rather the proprieties of each nature being preserved, concurring in one person and in one subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons but one and the same only-begotten Son of God, the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, according as the Prophets of old have taught us and as our Lord Jesus Christ, according as the Prophets of

old have taught us and as our Lord Jesus Christ himself hath instructed and the creed of the holy Fathers hath delivered to us."*

This we find basically acceptable, though not as a formula of Confession like or instead of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan *pistis*.

The second part is of a different kind, and needs separate examination. "We likewise declare that in him are two natural wills and two natural operations, indivisibly, inconvertibly, inseparably, unconfusedly, according to the teaching of the holy Fathers. And these two natural wills are not contrary to the one to the other (God forbid!) as the impious heretics assert, but his human will follows and that not as resisting and reluctant, but rather as subject to his divine and omnipotent will. For it was right that the flesh should be moved but subject to the divine will, according to the most wise Athanasius. For as his flesh is called and is the proper will of God the Word, as he himself says: "I came down from heaven, not that I might to do mine own will but the will of the Father which sent me!" Where he calls his own will the will of his flesh, inasmuch as his flesh was also his own. For as his most holy and immaculate animated flesh was not destroyed because it was deified but continued in its own state and nature. So also his human will, although deified, was not suppressed, but was rather preserved according to the saying of Gregory Theologus: "His will (i.e. the Saviour's) is not contrary to God but altogether deified."

We glorify two natural operations indivisibly, immutably, unconfusedly, inseparably in the same our Lord Jesus Christ our true God, that is to say a divine operation and a human operation, according to the divine preacher Leo, who most distinctly asserts as follows: "For each form does in communion with the other what pertains properly to it, the world, namely, doing that which pertains to the World, and the flesh that which pertains to the flesh."

For we will not admit one natural operation in God and in the creature as we will not exalt into the divine essence what is

*N.P.N.F., *op.cit.*, p. 345A.

created, nor will we bring down the glory of the divine nature to the place suited to the creature.

Here, as earlier in the decree, the Tome of Leo is expressly affirmed. The decree actually calls the Tome "the pillar of the right faith". You can perhaps understand that all that is rather difficult for us to accept. For us Leo is still a heretic. It may be possible for us to refrain from condemning him by name, in the interests of restoring communion between us. But we cannot in good conscience accept the Tome of Leo as "the pillar of the right faith" or accept a Council which made such declaration. The Council approves explicitly what I clearly regard as heresy in the Tome of Leo. "Each a form does in communion with the other what pertains properly to it, the word, namely doing that which pertains to the Word, and the flesh that which pertains to the flesh".* If one rightly understands the hypostatic union, it is not possible to say that the flesh does something on its own, even if it is said to be in union with the word. The flesh does not have its own hypostasis. It is the hypostasis of the word which acts through the flesh. It is the same hypostasis of the word which does the actions of the word and of his own flesh.

The argument in the *horos* of this sixth council is basically unacceptable to us. The reason it gives for not admitting one natural operation in Christ which is both divine and human, proceeding from the divine and human natures of the same hypostasis, is that they would "not exalt into the divine essence what is created, nor bring down the glory of the divine nature to the place suited to the creature".

One can understand the first part of this objection, though not the conclusion drawn from it. The creature is not to participate in the divine *ousia*, but only in the uncreated *energeia* of the Divine essence. But in Jesus Christ, man the creature, is united to the divine person or hypostasis. If we deny that, we are not Christians. The operation of the incarnate Logos is a divine-human *energeia* and we cannot say that it was only the flesh or the human nature that was crucified. They crucified the Lord of Glory.

*agit enim utraque formae alterius communio quod proprium est; Verbo scilicet operante quod Verbi est, et carne exequens quod carnis est.

What is the point of saying: "We will not bring down the glory of the divine nature to the place suited to the creature", unless the sixth council wanted to deny the incarnation itself".

It seems to us that the sixth council was much more based on the Tome of Leo than on the writings of St. Cyril. Where it is based on Cyrilline teaching, it is acceptable, as for example where it says both the miracles and the sufferings were performed by the one entity, Christ our true God who became man. We are unable to say what this Council says when it affirms "two wills and two operations concerning most fitly in him". We are not sure that "each nature wills and does the things proper to it", for we believe that it is the hypostasis of Christ who wills and operates through his divine-human nature. The natures have no subsistence of their own apart from the hypostasis who operates in both natures. We would thus prefer to speak of the one incarnate nature of the logos, both divine and human natures united in the one hypostasis of the logos, with a divine-human will and operation.

To summarise: Acceptance of the Sixth Council is much more difficult for us than the acceptance of Chalcedon. The following are the main reasons:

- a) Quite apart from the fact that our own fathers were not present at this Council, we observe that this Council explicitly and unjustifiedly condemns our fathers, Dioscurus and Severus, and calls the former "hated of God", and the doctrine of the latter "mad and wicked",
- b) We are unable to accept the *dithelete* formula, attributing will and energy to the natures rather than to the hypostasis. We can only affirm the one united and unconfused divine-human nature, will and energy of Christ the incarnate Lord.
- c) We find that this Sixth Council exalts as its standard mainly the teaching of Leo and Agatho, Popes of Rome, paying only lip-service to the teachings of the Blessed Cyril. We regard Leo as heretic for his teaching that the will and operation of Christ is to be attributed to the two natures of Christ rather than to the one hypostasis. The

human nature is as "natural" to the Christ, the incarnate word as the divine. It is one hypostasis who now is both divine and human, and all the activities come from the one hypostasis. We therefore insist on the one theandric nature, will and energy of Christ the Incarnate Lord, and condemn the teachings of Leo. We cannot therefore accept the horos of the Sixth Council based on the teachings of Leo. This subject of course deserves further and a more detailed study.

CONCLUSION

This paper has been written subject to correction by my learned brethren on the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian sides. Its implications are quite serious. If the restoration of communion between our two families of Churches were to be dependent on our acceptance of the four Councils now rejected by the non-Chalcedonian family, then we have little reason at present to hope that this condition can be fulfilled. If this is the *conditio sine qua non* in the minds of theologians on the non-chalcedonian side, we would like to be told so, in order that we may communicate this to the holy Synods of our churches and await further instruction from them as to whether we should continue our bi-lateral conversations. My own view would be that we should so continue, because despite our basic disagreement on this point of the four Councils, we do still have so much in common, and we have a significant contribution to make together as Eastern Orthodox Churches to the world-wide ecumenical discussion.

On the other hand, if we take seriously the valuable insight of Professor Konidaris, that the formulations of the First and Second Councils are of a decisive character, and later councils are to be seen only as exegetical to the meaning of the faith of Nicea and Constantinople, then it is possible for us to recommend to our parent churches to begin formal conversations with a view to restoring communion between our two families. The following is preferred as a basic or starting point for such conversation:

1. In a substantially common statement, to be formally declared by the Holy Episcopal Synod of all the auto-cephalous

churches, with any necessary changes to suit the condition of each Church, we should state clearly that we share between our two families, substantially the same authentic tradition of the undivided Christian church in relation to our understanding of and teaching on the Blessed and Holy Trinity, the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the procession and activity of the Holy Spirit, the nature of the Church and the place of the blessed Virgin Mary, the saints and all the faithful departed in it, the nature of the ministry and sacraments in the Church, and our expectation of the world to come with the advent in glory of our Lord and the resurrection of the dead.

2. This common statement would also include a page on our common Christology, emphasizing mainly those things which we have in common, but also speaking of our different formulations in regard to nature, will and energy in our Lord Jesus Christ. It would be stated that variety in forms of worship, language and culture, and in formulations of faith can within certain prescribed limits serve to enrich, rather than impoverish the common tradition of the church.
3. The statement would also make clear that while it is not possible for the Chalcedonian Churches to repudiate or reject any of the seven councils, it is equally difficult for the non-Chalcedonians now to formally accept the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh Councils recognized by the Chalcedonian family. It could be made clear that the Chalcedonian Churches would refrain from condemning Dioscorus and Severus as heretics. It could be made clear also that our two families agree in condemning the teachings of both Nestorius and Eutyches as heretical.
4. The statement would also say that at least for the time being, the jurisdictions would remain distinct on the basis of the different liturgical traditions, e.g. the two Patriarchates of Antioch and Alexandria, as well as of Constantinople could continue with their different jurisdictions. The hope should be expressed in the statement that as mutual confidence grows between the various liturgical traditions, a reorganization of

the jurisdictions would become possible. Clear assurances can be given to certain churches that entering unto communion with another church will not violate its administrative or jurisdictional integrity.

The immediate next step is the appointment of a Joint Commission by the two families, who will meet officially and work out the statement along suggested lines. The Standing Committee of the Oriental Orthodox Churches has already been so authorized to act on behalf of the Oriental Orthodox Churches. As soon as similar action is announced by the churches of the Chalcedonian family, we could proceed to the convening of a joint meeting of the two commissions. One of our jobs here at the present meeting would be to prepare an agenda for the joint meeting, and to nominate a small group of people who will be prepared to assist in the organization of the joint meeting.

I even venture to suggest that the first meeting of the Joint Commission should be held in January 1971 in Addis Ababa.

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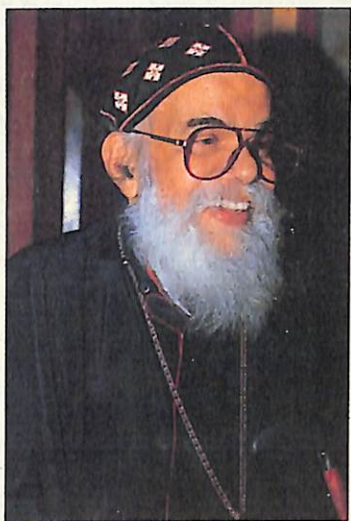
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Besides, Mar Gregorios had written more than thousand Articles on different topics in English, French, German and Malayalam.

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Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios

In this title, Dr. Paul Mar Gregorios emphasises on the Eastern Church—Orthodox Churches. He tells us the beliefs of the Orthodox Church and its specific structure and character.

Christianity came to India in 52 AD, when one of the original Twelve Apostles, St. Thomas, established Churches here.

The Orthodox Church stresses on the quality of spiritual life, showing love and compassion to all, rather than on evangelism or social activism. Whatever it does, "It is a labour of service in humility, which is its own reward", and not towards conversion.

The coming of western missionaries to India has broken the Eastern Church into various factions, yet it continues to this day.

This book gives a deep insight to the Orthodox Church, from an historical, geographical and cultural perspective.

Will make good reading for those interested in early Church History and general readers who want to know more about the Eastern Orthodox Church.